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# Edith Trevor's Secret

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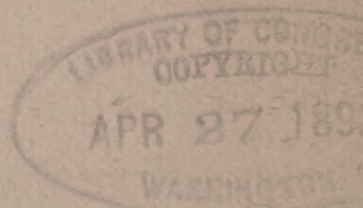
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NEW YORK:

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EDITH TREVOR'S SECRET

CHAPTER I.

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# EDITH TREVOR'S SECRET.

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## CHAPTER I.

### IN THE BLACK FOREST.



IN the midst of the Black Forest, in Germany, lies hidden the picturesque village of Zorlitz. Off the usual routes of travel, it is seldom visited by tourists, and still preserves its primitive simplicity of manners, costumes, and living. Its quaint houses, on either side of its two steep and narrow streets, resemble the toy-houses of Nuremberg manufacture. The principal occupations of the inhabitants are the breeding and training of song-birds and the carving of wooden toys. The annual visits

of the agents who purchase birds and toys for the great marts form the principal events of life in Zorlitz. The din and bustle of the great world never penetrates to this secluded spot ; the cares, passions, and anxieties of struggling existence in cities and towns are unknown to these simple peasants, who toil patiently, keep their old-time festivals, and live out their quiet lives in the homes they have inherited, content, and even happy, in their narrow lot.

The principal building in the village is the little wooden Lutheran church, the only house of worship in Zorlitz. It stands upon a hill overlooking the hamlet, and close in its shadow is the pastor's house, a quaint timbered dwelling, with steep roof, many balconies, and wide windows, set in a large garden which in their brief season is ablaze with flowers.

The pastor of this little flock, a year or two ago, was Herr Brocken or Father Brocken, as he was affectionately called by his people. He was a German, of course, tall, gaunt, and scholarly-looking, with gray hair and bent figure, a kindly, simple-hearted man, devoted to his books, and finding in them and in his charge all that his soul best loved.

He had been graduated from the University of Göttingen, and had been for some years thereafter a tutor in a noble family in the Grand Duchy of Baden. He had married, when quite elderly, a middle-aged governess, who had been employed in the same family with himself, and chance, or

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providence, throwing in his way the pastorate of the little church at Zorlitz, he had accepted the humble charge with thankfulness, and had settled down in this out-of-the-world spot to the practice of his ministerial duties and the study of his beloved books. Here he had dwelt twenty years, the father, pastor and guide of his simple people ; here his wife had recently died ; and here he hoped to be buried. He was childless, his family consisting of an old housekeeper and a young girl known as his niece.

This niece of the Herr Pastor was the idol of the good people of Zorlitz. She tended the peasants in their illnesses ; she visited the quaint old houses like a sunbeam, bringing with her always warmth and sunshine. She assisted the old school-mistress in her daily labor, instructing the maidens in the arts of embroidery and lace-making, in which she was herself proficient. The children followed after her in her walks, happy in winning her smiling notice. And, more than all, she was the light of the old parsonage, the joy of the Herr Pastor's life ; the one being whom he regarded with deep and especial tenderness.

One afternoon in June, at the time we have indicated, Herr Brocken's niece came forth from the little school-house, her self-imposed task for the day over, and, after making a call upon a sick old woman, began the ascent of the steep hill in the direction of the parsonage. When half-way up the slope, she turned aside into the woods, pursuing

a shaded path at a leisurely pace, swinging her broad-brimmed hat by its ribbons from her arm, and carroling a German song in a sweet voice that roused the birds to emulation.

She was no prim, meek maiden, this niece of Herr Pastor's—no patient young woman, content with her lot and seeking nothing better. She was no square-built, heavy-faced fraulein, slow of step and perceptions.

She was about seventeen years of age, tall, slim, and graceful as a gazelle, with a beauty unmistakably English, and yet more unmistakably patrician. Her forehead was broad and low and very white, and was crowned with masses of crinkling, red-brown hair. Her nose was a delicate aquiline, her upper lip short, and exquisitely curved, betraying at times an unconscious haughtiness; her mouth tender, sweet, yet often mutinous in its expression. Her complexion was of a delicate pallor, far removed from all suspicion of ill health. The crowning glory of this marvelously lovely and spirited face was the eyes, which were large and luminous, of a reddish-brown color, like her hair, and with a golden glint in them; deep, dusky, haunting eyes, just now expressive of girlish discontent and unrest.

This girl, with her wonderful beauty, which would have made a sensation in the queen's drawing-room, with her exquisite refinement of looks and manner that declared her gentle birth and breeding, possessed a grandly generous nature, a warm heart,

and impulsive temperament, and, withal, a personal magnetism that attracted every one to her.

She had been thoroughly well educated, the good pastor and his wife having gloried in her keen intellect, and in her thirst for knowledge. They had taught her various languages of Europe, music, for which she had a positive genius, drawing and painting, and various feminine arts ; but her accomplishments were among the least of her charms.

The path came out upon a spring, whose clear pool was shadowed by bending trees. This was a favorite resort of the young girl, and she sat down upon the green bank, the song dying on her lips, and a strange gravity overspreading her face.

"Oh, dear !" she said, sighing ; "I am so tired of this dear, stupid old Zorlitz. I wish that I could see something of the world outside. I have read of the great towns, of different people, of life beside which ours is stagnation. I am growing discontented. Must I live here all my life, and die, and be buried here, knowing nothing of any better existence ? If it were not for leaving uncle I'd beg to be allowed to go somewhere as governess. But I can't leave him, and he will never leave Zorlitz. And yet I'd give half my remaining life for a change, if I might only go somewhere and see something of the world."

Did some mischievous spirit hear her complaint and resolve to grant her wish ? For a change in her life was close at hand—a change greater than even

her vivid imagination would have dared conceive. That very hour was the last she would ever know of commonplace existence. Perhaps it was as well that she could not read the strange future before her, else she might have shrunk from it in terror and misgiving, preferring the safe shelter of Zorlitz parsonage in the depths of the Black Forest to the whirling vortex, the perils and troubles lying in wait for her in the great "world outside."

She was still musing discontentedly when a sudden rifle-shot rang out sharply upon the air, a deer went flying past, and a stinging pain in the girl's left arm sent a thrill of faintness quivering through her.

A low cry escaped her lips as she realized that she had been shot. That cry was echoed from the horrified lips of two huntsmen, who bounded into the glade, and halted abruptly at sight of her.

"By Jove!" cried one, speaking in the English language. "A perfect Diana, Glenham! And you've shot her!"

The other raised his hand in an imperious gesture, commanding silence, and advanced towards the fainting girl, his countenance still wearing an expression of horror, in which were now mingled a deep pity and keen remorsefulness.

The pastor's niece had fainted quite away by the time he had reached her. Flinging down his unlucky rifle, the young man devoted himself to her recovery with peculiar gentleness and reverence,

and with an assiduity that speedily recalled her to consciousness. She opened her eyes upon the strangers, blushed vividly, and arose unsteadily to her feet, retreating a few paces.

"A perfect little queen!" cried the gentleman who had before spoken. "Who would have dreamed of finding such a magnificent little beauty in this wilderness? I say, Glenham—"

The girl's pale face flushed scarlet.

"Pardon," she said, speaking in English, with an accent as pure as that of the gentleman, "but I understand English."

The two young men were, for the moment, covered with confusion. Then the one who had been called Glenham addressed himself to the young lady, avowed himself the author of her injury, lamented his own awkwardness, and begged to be permitted to examine her arm to ascertain the extent of her wound, and to endeavor to alleviate her suffering.

His evident sorrow, his chivalric courtesy, impressed the girl, who quietly gave assent, and permitted him to examine her arm.

"My friend, in his chagrin at his awkwardness, has forgotten to introduce himself," said the gentleman who had first spoken. "Permit me to remedy his deficiency. He is Gordon, Earl of Glenham, of Yorkshire, England. And I have the honor to be his very good friend, Maldred Crafton. We came on an exploring and hunting expedition to these

wilds, little expecting to find here a fellow-country-woman."

The young lady acknowledged the introductions with a bow, and responded :

"I fear that I cannot lay claim to the same nationality with yourself. I am Cecil Rosse, the niece of Herr Brocken, the Lutheran pastor of Zorlitz."

An increased pallor and sudden compression of her perfect lips brought Lord Glenham hastily to her assistance. She pushed up her sleeve, displaying a white and rounded arm that would have been the admiration of a sculptor, and the young earl shuddered at the gaping, bleeding wound his bullet had made in traversing the dainty flesh. While he bathed the arm in the water of the pool and bandaged it to prevent the further flow of blood, Cecil Rosse surveyed him and his companion attentively.

To the girl, reared in that secluded region, seeing beside her aged relative only the rude peasants of Zorlitz, young Lord Glenham appeared a very demi-god.

He was strikingly handsome, with a distinguished presence, tall and nobly formed, with keen, gray eyes, a blond mustache shading a firm, well-shaped mouth which was capable of expressing every shade of emotion, and with a grand head crowned with little, close-curling rings of blond hair. He was about twenty-eight years of age, yet he retained a youthful freshness of feeling, was

chivalrous and noble in the highest degree, and was not only unmarried but he had never loved.

His companion, Maldred Crafton, was his intimate friend and distant relative, who possessed a small fortune, was about thirty years of age, and also unmarried. The intimacy between the two men was inexplicable, for never were two persons more unlike than Lord Glenham and Maldred Crafton. His lordship was too noble and unsuspecting to discern the real nature of his kinsman, which was sly and scheming, intensely avaricious, and utterly unscrupulous. Yet Crafton's exterior was plausible and insinuating; he was singularly gentle in his manners; and his black eyes and swarthy features had been too well trained to reveal the secrets of his soul.

Cecil Rosse was not sufficiently skilled in physiognomy to read the characters of these two men. She only knew that she liked Lord Glenham, and with her liking came an instinctive faith in him. As for Crafton, she felt for him a singular distrust and an aversion that was destined to grow and strengthen into a stronger emotion.

When Lord Glenham had completed his small attempt at surgery, and the wounded arm had been well bandaged, Cecil Rosse thanked him courteously and avowed her intention of hastening home.

"We will accompany you, Miss Rosse," said the earl. "No, do not refuse. You are not able to go alone. The loss of blood and the shock of the

accident have been too much for you. Lean upon me, else I shall think that you have not forgiven me !”

Cecil took his arm and led the way by the forest-path in the direction of her home. A few minutes' walk brought them out upon the steep village street and very near the parsonage. As they entered the little garden-gate, the old housekeeper, Gretchen, came out to meet them with loud expressions of alarm at the evident weakness of her young mistress.

The old woman was but a peasant like her neighbors, but twenty years' residence in the family of the Herr Pastor had given her a refinement that her neighbors lacked, and made her appear somewhat above her condition. She fairly worshiped the pastor's niece, and Cecil forced a smile and disengaged her arm from its support as she said :

“Hush, Gretchen, you will alarm my uncle. I am not seriously hurt.”

She hastened to explain the recent accident, and then invited her companions to enter the house.

“Not now,” answered Lord Glenham. “But we will avail ourselves of your kind invitation to-morrow, Miss Rosse, and call to inquire after your arm and also to pay our respects to the Herr Pastor.”

He raised his hat courteously, and waited until Cecil had entered the dwelling with her old servant, and then he led the way down to the village.

At a little distance from the parsonage Lord



CECIL ROSSE WOUNDED IN THE ARM.—See Page 14.



Glenham halted and looked back, a new light in his eyes, a new glow on his face.

"You seem to have changed your plans, Glenham," said Crafton, slowly, regarding his kinsman keenly. "There is no inn in Zorlitz, and the peasant who took us in this morning has such beastly accommodations that you purposed going on to-day. Why do you remain until to-morrow?"

The earl turned towards his companion his glowing face.

"Do you believe in love at first sight, Crafton?" he asked, abruptly.

The swarthy face of Crafton lit up with a sullen glow. A sinister light leaped to his furtive eyes.

"Yes," he said, huskily, "I believe in love at first sight."

He did not add that his belief was of not an hour's growth.

"Then, since you believe in love at first sight, you will not scoff at me," said Lord Glenham. "I love Miss Rosse, Crafton. I love her as Romeo loved Juliet at their first meeting! As you know, I have never loved before. I have had a glorious ideal which, until now, I have never seen realized. Do I seem boyish? Yet this love, which comes to me late and arouses all the ardor of my soul, is the one love of my life! Crafton, I will win Miss Rosse to be my wife, or I will go down to my grave unmarried!"

"You are hard hit, Glenham," said Crafton, with

a little sneer. "You don't know who or what Miss Rosse is—"

"I'll stake my life on her purity and truth !" cried the earl, passionately. "For the rest I care nothing !"

"She may be of vile parentage—"

"I know better. But whatever she is, I love her. I shall stay here for the present, Crafton. Blessed be the fate that brought me here. And when I go hence, perhaps she may go with me."

The two men walked on together, Lord Glenham in a blissful silence, Crafton with his face averted and his features distorted in a malignant expression that would have startled his companion could the earl have seen it.



## CHAPTER II.

### A PATH OF THORNS.

In accordance with his expressed intention, Lord Glenham called at the Zorlitz parsonage upon the day subsequent to that on which had occurred the accident we have narrated, and inquired anxiously after the health of Miss Rosse. He was accompanied by his friend, Maldred Crafton, and old Gretchen, after informing them that her young mistress would see them, ushered them into the Herr Pastor's study and presence.

Herr Brocken arose from his easy-chair and the perusal of a musty old tome to receive them. He was about seventy years of age, venerable of aspect, with long, thin, bleached hair, a long, gray beard, his eyes concealed by spectacles, his mild, benignant countenance wearing an absent look, his entire appearance indicating the scholar and book-worm.

The young earl introduced himself and his companion. The pastor had heard the story of the acci-

dent, and received his lordship's fervent regrets and apologies with kindness, declaring that the wound Cecil had received was not serious in itself, and had been so well and promptly treated that no dangerous consequences would result from it.

"Miss Rosse is your niece, I think she said, *Mein Herr*," said Crafton pleasantly, his hard black eyes studying the old bookworm intently. "She looks like an English young lady, and not at all German. And she speaks English, I notice, like an Englishwoman. Her name, too, might be English. Pardon me, but my curiosity is quite piqued at finding a young lady of her distinguished appearance and remarkable beauty in a little forest hamlet like this!"

The pastor's face clouded. He said, briefly, as if he preferred not to pursue the subject :

"Cecil's father was an Englishman. Ah," he added, with a sigh of relief, "here comes Cecil herself!"

The door opened and the girl came in with a gliding step and a peculiar grace that might have befitted a princess. The young men both arose, and she greeted them with a kindling flush, yet with a quiet self-possession that charmed them.

They had noticed on the previous day that she was attired differently from the peasant maidens of Zorlitz. Upon this morning she wore a simple white gown, which clung to her slim shape in soft folds, unbroken by ruffle or tuck. A frill of lace

rose about her throat, and frills of lace fell over her small hands. A rose fresh from the garden served as a brooch, and her red-brown hair crinkled in masses from her forehead, falling over her shoulders in ripples that glittered like gold in a stray beam of sunshine. The impression she had made upon the two young men on the previous day was strengthened and quickened into vivid passion during this second interview.

When they went away, the resolve of each of the two men to woo, and if possible to win, Cecil Rosse had become the purpose of their lives.

They settled themselves comfortably at Zorlitz, hunted in the forest, and visited the parsonage daily. Absorbed in his books, the Herr Pastor paid little heed to the visitors, whom Cecil entertained. June deepened into July, and August came and went, and still the Englishmen lingered at Zorlitz. No one but sharp-eyed old Gretchen suspected that they were the lovers of "little Cecil," whom the villagers regarded as little more than a child. No one but old Gretchen saw the change in her young mistress, but she rightly interpreted the restlessness, changefulness, the capriciousness of Cecil as indicating a disturbed heart.

"She loves the English lord," the old woman said to herself, well contented. "And he loves her. The Herr Pastor is failing, no one can see it but I, but when he dies the little fraulein will have a grand

home and a protector, and will not be driven to earn her own living, as I have often feared !”

During these months at Zorlitz, Crafton had made inquiries among the villagers concerning the parentage of Cecil Rosse. He had once or twice spoken upon the subject to Herr Brocken, who had evaded his questions, and this evasion had convinced him that there was some mystery about the girl's origin, but none of the peasants could or would enlighten him.

It was plain to Crafton that the young earl, with his blond beauty, was the favored lover of Cecil, but this conviction was by no means agreeable to him. Meeting the beautiful girl daily Crafton also had become enamored of her, and was filled with envy and jealousy of his companion.

“I shall win her !” he said to himself, grimly. “I can work and wait. In spite of any obstacle in my path, in spite of Glenham's beauty, rank, and wealth, in spite of the fact even that the girl loves him and dislikes me, I will win her ! I devote myself, mind and body, heart and soul, to the task—but if I should fail—as I shall not—I would utterly destroy the girl before any other should possess her !”

The hard, evil look in his eyes attested to the truthfulness of this declaration.

It was now the last week in August. One morning, as the two young men wandered together

in the forest, rifles on shoulder, Crafton said, carelessly :

"We've been here nearly three months, Glenham. How time flies ! Have you thought of your engagements for September ? You remember that you invited a dozen guests to spend the month at your box in the Scottish Highlands ?"

"I remember, Crafton, although I had nearly forgotten it."

"We must go home at once," said Crafton, "if you would not insult your invited guests, and mortally offend the most magnificent and the wealthiest woman in England. I mean Lady Trevor, of course. The charming widow is to spend September on her own Highland estate, adjoining your own, and her castle is to be filled with guests. You're a lucky fellow, Glenham. I fancy that Lady Trevor would not object to changing her name to Lady Glenham."

"That is your fancy, Crafton, nothing more," replied the earl, reddening. "I admire Lady Trevor ; every one admires her ; but, as you well know, I have never dreamed of love or marriage until now. Perhaps you are jealous ?" he added, smiling. "I remember that you always admired Lady Trevor."

"But more particularly her fortune. I am reputed to be wealthy, but she has the veritable dross, Glenham, and if I had the ghost of a chance with her I might—I might—"

Crafton did not finish his sentence. The leading characteristic of his nature was his avarice. For wealth and a brilliant marriage with one like Lady Trevor he felt, at that instant, that he might be willing to relinquish love. He put the thought from him, however, as he recalled the image of the beautiful girl.

"I think," said Lord Glenham, "that I will go on to the village, and leave my rifle, and change my hunting-suit, and then visit the parsonage."

His look declared his purpose.

"You will go 'on matrimonial thoughts intent?' Well, good luck go with you, Glenham. You'll succeed. An English earl, with a pedigree tracing back beyond the days of the Conqueror, with a rent-roll of twenty thousand a year, handsome, and all that sort of thing, don't stand much chance of refusal from a little half-German girl, poor as poverty, and only a Lutheran pastor's niece!"

There was a bitterness in this assertion that Lord Glenham scarcely perceived in his annoyance.

"If Miss Rosse should accept me as her future husband, Crafton," he said, gravely, "she will do so through no consideration of my possessions—that I know."

He moved on with a rapid step, vanishing down the path leading to the village.

Crafton wheeled about abruptly, and made his way by a short cut to the parsonage.

Leaving his rifle outside, he sought the Herr Pastor in his study.

Herr Brocken arose wearily, betraying a physical weakness that a more observant person must have noticed.

"Alone, sir?" asked the pastor.

"Yes, alone," replied Crafton, smiling. "My friend will be here presently upon a most important errand. You can guess it, perhaps?"

"Not I," said the scholar, looking puzzled. "An important errand?"

"Yes, Mein Herr," said Crafton. "He will not like me to betray him, yet you must have noticed his admiration for your beautiful niece. Lord Glenham desires to marry Miss Rosse—"

"To marry her? Why, she is but a child!"

"She seems a child to you, no doubt, but Glenham loves her and believes that she loves him!"

The old scholar looked bewildered. He passed his hand over his forehead, and repeated Crafton's words without appearing to understand them.

"Lord Glenham comes of an ancient family, noted for its wealth and its pride," remarked Crafton, with the air of a mediator. "He will be a grand match for your niece, Herr Pastor. The Glenhams have all wedded rank and wealth, and my friend will be the first of his name who has wedded beneath him. For, of course, Herr Brocken, good as your family undoubtedly is, it is no match for Glenham's.

With his lordship's intense pride, I hope he will never regret a marriage beneath him."

The pastor pushed his scanty and long locks away from his forehead with a trembling hand.

"I thank you for your forewarning, Mr. Crafton," he said. "This takes me quite by surprise. I know not what to say. If you will seek Cecil for a little while I will try to command my thoughts."

Crafton bowed assent, and sought Cecil in her own pretty sitting-room, which opened upon the garden. A little later he took his leave. He had scarcely departed when Lord Glenham made his appearance, and was shown by old Gretchen, in obedience to his request, into the pastor's study.

The young earl, in manly and straightforward fashion, declared to her guardian his love for Cecil Rosse, and asked permission to address her as her suitor.

"My lord," said the old scholar, "Cecil is not your equal in rank. The marriage is not suitable. She is but a child—far too young to marry."

"She is my equal, Herr Pastor—more than my equal," exclaimed Lord Glenham. "What are the idle distinctions of rank in a case like this? She is a lady born and bred. Your family, Herr Brocken, as I have heard you say, is good and honorable. What more can I ask than that my wife should come from such a family? As to her age, that fault will remedy itself with time. I love her, Herr Pastor—"

"Pardon," said the old pastor, raising his shaking hand. "I had not thought to confess it, but you must know Cecil is not my niece—"

"Not your niece?"

"She is of English parentage. Can you not guess the truth? She was sent here to be hidden from the world."

There was a brief silence. Then Lord Glenham asked, in a low, pained voice :

"Who were her parents?"

"I do not know!"

"Is Cecil Rosse her real name?"

"No, my lord. Listen. My wife had been a governess, and had had the care of children, whom she dearly loved. But after our marriage, after we had settled here, no children came to us, and the good wife pined for the sound of baby voices, the clinging of baby arms. And then it was that Providence sent Cecil to us. One rainy night in autumn fourteen years ago, a traveling carriage drew up before the lighted window of our parsonage, and a man came in bringing a little child in his arms. The man was English, evidently of the rank of gentleman. The child was three years old, a beautiful little angel, who put out her arms to my wife and nestled in her bosom. Then the man told us that the child had no name, nor relatives, no place in the world, and that he wanted her brought up a simple peasant, and that he would pay a certain sum every year for her support if we would keep her. The good

wife begged my consent, and the man went away and left the little one."

"What was the man's name?"

"He did not give it," said the pastor, simply. "He did not stop in the village. No one saw him come or go. He was not in my house ten minutes."

"And the child's name?"

"She called herself 'Pet.' She knew no other name, and whether that was a term of caressing, or the diminutive of some English name, we did not know. So my wife named her Cecil Rosse, after the first pupil the good frau taught. The history is simple, my lord. You know it all."

"Has that man ever visited you since?"

"Never. But once a year comes a little packet of money from the London post-office, without any word. My poor, proud Cecil! For she is very proud, my lord, this little, nameless girl."

"Does Cecil know her history?"

"No; I have not dared yet to tell her."

"Then keep it a secret still from her. She must never know it. And give her to me, Mein Herr, if she will marry me, and let me guard and protect her."

"You are generous, my lord, but this cannot yet be. You shall not marry her on a generous impulse. Besides, she is too young. Go back to your own country for one year, leave her to me, and if, another summer, you still love Cecil, come and claim her.

But now you must not speak to her of love. She is but a child, she is only seventeen."

Lord Glenham argued the point with all the energy and ardor of a passionate lover, but the gentle old bookworm was inflexible. The good pastor felt that he had right on his side. Cecil was too young to marry. The earl should have time to consider the wisdom of his purpose, and Lord Glenham was forced to acquiesce in his decision.

Cecil was called in, and the earl took leave of her in her guardian's presence. His lordship's tongue was silenced upon the subject of love, but his eyes told the tale his lips had been forbidden to utter, and the girl's soul thrilled under his worshiping gaze.

"I am going away, Cecil," said his lordship, with a tenderness he could not repress. "I am going home to England, but I shall return next summer. Good-by, Cecil, good-by, my darling!"

The sorrow in her sweet eyes robbed him of his self-control. He caught her to his breast and showered kisses on her pure young face in an irrepressible agitation. Then, gently putting her from him, he wrung the pastor's hand and dashed from the house.

An hour later, Lord Glenham and Maldred Crafton left Zorlitz on their way to England, the latter promising to himself a speedy and secret return.

That evening, as the good old pastor sat alone in

his study, meditating upon the great event of the day, a sudden misgiving came to him, and he asked himself if he had indeed done wisely in sending away Cecil's lover.

"If I were to die, what would become of her?" he asked himself. "And yet, how could I take advantage of his lordship's generous love and permit him to marry a girl of unknown origin without having had time to consider the matter soberly, and removed from the glamour of her presence. A year will soon pass. If then he still wishes to marry her, I will be willing. But yet, my mind misgives me—what may not happen in a year?"

The door opened and old Gretchen came in, bearing in one hand a lighted candle, in the other a small packet upon which was impressed the London postmark.

The annual sum of money sent for Cecil's support by her unknown guardian had arrived.

The pastor tore open the packet as soon as Gretchen had retired. Two English banknotes fell upon his knee, and a folded sheet of paper, upon which he saw handwriting, followed them.

The old scholar started, recoiling, his gentle face growing troubled and perplexed.

"A letter?" he muttered. "The first letter I ever received from Cecil's former guardian. What has he to say to me? Does he intend to take the child from me? Is the long mystery of fourteen years to be cleared away at last?"



### CHAPTER III.

#### LEFT ALONE.

Herr Brocken unfolded the mysterious letter, a strange agitation quivering through all his nerves. He believed himself to stand upon the threshold of the solution of the strange mystery of Cecil's origin. A blur obscured his vision. He removed his spectacles and wiped them with a trembling hand. Then he spread out the sheet of paper, his eager old eyes fairly devouring its contents.

The letter, as he noticed after reading it, was written upon plain white paper, without watermark or imprint of any sort whatever. The handwriting was coarse, and slanted backwards, with evident attempt at disguise. There was no date to the letter, which was as follows :

“HERR BROCKEN : It is now fourteen years since I left with you the little nameless child whom you agreed to bring up, and in all that time I have never written a line to you, nor have I heard from you

directly, but I am aware that the child is, unfortunately, still alive. I have remitted regularly to you for her support the sum of fifty pounds per annum. I remit that sum herewith, as usual, in Bank of England notes. As she is now about seventeen years old, and quite able to make her own way, I shall not send any more money for her. As this is the first, it will also be the last communication you will ever receive from me.

“I suppose that she has been brought up, in accordance with my instructions, as a German peasant girl. I suppose, also, that she is contented with her lot, since she has never known any other. If she should marry some wood-carver of your people, then my best wishes for her welfare will have been fulfilled.

“It is scarcely necessary for me to repeat what I told you fourteen years ago, that the girl has no friends save those she may have made at Zorlitz; no relations; and that the best she can do for herself is to live and die in the obscurity of the Black Forest. My care and concern for her end herewith. Neither she nor you will ever hear from me again.”

There was no signature to this epistle. Herr Brocken read it over the second time and sighed.

“The unknown guardian washes his hands of Cecil,” he muttered. “All connection between the girl and her early past is now completely severed. She will never solve the mystery, will never know

her origin. I almost wish that I had not sent Lord Glenham away, and yet I could not do otherwise. According to the traditions and usages of the world, a girl like Cecil, no matter how great her beauty, genius, and goodness, is no fitting wife for a great lord."

The door opened while his eyes were riveted on the paper, and Cecil came in slowly, half-shyly, her face paler than usual, her eyes red with weeping.

"What is it, liebchen?" asked the pastor, tenderly. "What troubles you?"

"I am lonely, uncle," cried Cecil, wearily. "How tiresome the dear old parsonage is! If we could only go away somewhere!"

"You miss the Englishmen, dear? So do I," said Herr Brocken, sorrowfully. "Come, sit by me and we will comfort each other."

Cecil approached him more swiftly, and sat on a stool at his knee. And then her eyes rested upon the open missive.

"A letter, uncle!" she exclaimed. "Who can have written to you? Is it a last message from Lord Glenham?"

The pastor made a movement to put the letter in his desk, but changed his purpose.

"My dear," he said, "you seem somehow less of a child to me than usual to-night. My heart is heavy and sore with many burdens. Shall I lay them upon your young shoulders?"

The tender young face grew stronger at once, resolute and thoughtful, with a gravity and courage that touched the old scholar.

"I did not know that you were bearing secret burdens, uncle," said Cecil. "Let me help you. Do you need money?"

The pastor glanced at the two bank-notes on his desk.

"No, dear, it is not any fear of poverty that troubles me," he said, gently. "I feel strangely weak. I realize to-night that I am growing old. I may not live another year, and there are things you ought to know. I will tell them to you now. Cecil, this handsome English lord asked me to-day for my consent to address you as your suitor."

The girl blushed and paled, and her eyes glowed with a swift and dazzling splendor.

"What did you say, uncle?" she whispered, after a little pause.

"I bade him wait a year. I told him that you were too young to marry."

"He loves me! He loves me!" Cecil said to herself softly, her glorious young beauty radiant as a star. "And he is coming back next year! Oh, uncle, I am the happiest girl in all the world to-night!"

The old pastor sighed and stroked her red-brown hair with a shaking hand.

"He may never return, Cecil," he said, very gravely. "He loves you now, but considerations

of worldly wisdom may decide him to seek a bride who is his equal—”

“You allude to my being poor, uncle?”

“Not that alone,” said the old pastor, nerving himself to the task of telling Cecil the whole truth. “Lord Glenham is rich, and would not care if his bride were poor. But he is proud, and when the first glamour of passion should be dissipated, he would reproach himself for having married a girl of no family—”

“Oh, uncle!” interrupted the girl, in loving reproach. “You are not titled; you are no proud courtier; but you are of gentle blood, and your niece is the equal of even a proud English lord!”

Herr Brocken wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

“I feel strangely weak to-night,” he said, wearily. “Who can tell what will happen? It is time that you knew all, Cecil. Tell me, my child, have you never wondered that you look so little like me or the dear wife who was a mother to you?”

“Why, no, uncle. My father was an Englishman—”

“Your mother, too, was English, for aught I know to the contrary. Child of my love and prayers, my darling, how can I tell you that not one drop of my blood flows in your veins?”

“Uncle!”

“It is true. Do not look at me like that, Cecil.

Why, is it such pain to know that I am not your uncle?"

"Who, then, am I?" asked the girl, wonderingly, with a white, bewildered face.

"I do not know. I do not even know your real name and parentage!"

"Uncle!" repeated Cecil, involuntarily.

"It is true, dear. You are certainly of English birth, that is all I know. There is a mystery about you which will never be solved in this world, Cecil."

"A mystery? You do not know who I am?" cried the girl, in a quick, startled voice. "How and where did you find me, uncle? And my name—is not that a clew to my parentage?"

"Your name, dear, was the gift of my good wife. You had no name save 'Pet,'—none whatever. You are frightened, dear. Be brave and calm. It pains me to see that wild sorrow in your eyes, my child. I would have spared you the story, but it is right that you should know it."

"It is right, uncle. Where did you find me? In some asylum in the great cities?"

"No, Cecil. Fourteen years ago, one rainy evening, a carriage stopped before our door and a man came from it and entered our dwelling with a little child in his arms. He told the good wife and me that the child was nameless, friendless, poor; that he wanted her brought up as a peasant; and that he would pay fifty pounds a year for her support. The good wife was fond of children, and this one

was as beautiful as an angel. The child stretched out her arms to my wife and nestled in her bosom. The good wife's heart was won. She begged to keep the child, and the man put down the sum he had mentioned on the table and departed. We never saw him again!"

"The child was I?"

"The child was you, Cecil. We took you into our hearts as our very own. Old Gretchen knew the story, but the villagers were content to believe you my niece. We did not bring you up as a peasant, as the man had enjoined. Even at three years of age, you were a perfect little lady, refined, gentle, and well-bred, with pretty imperious little airs that hinted of high station. If we had wished to make you a peasant, it would have been impossible. Generations of culture had given to you remarkably keen perceptions, and a quick, strong intellect. We brought you up as if you had been our own child. I taught you the branches of a sound and thorough education; my wife instructed you in music, painting and other accomplishments. We thought that when we should be gone you could earn your living, as we did for so many years, by teaching."

Cecil kissed the hand she held and dropped tears upon it.

"You have been very good to me," she said, softly. "May God bless and reward you, dear uncle. My own parents cast me off—do you think it was because I was a disgrace to them?"

The Herr Pastor bowed assent.

The girl's features were convulsed with keen, swift pain.

"Uncle," she said, "does Lord Glenham know all this?"

"Yes, dear. I told him to-day. I would not allow him to sacrifice himself to an impulse. In England, a marriage between him and you would be looked upon with abhorrence by people of his class."

"What did he say?"

"Of course he said that the mystery attaching to your origin mattered nothing to him," said Herr Brocken. "Love excuses everything."

"And you think such a marriage would be wrong, uncle?"

"Not so. If Lord Glenham stood alone in the world, with no one to be grieved by his acts, the marriage would be well enough. But Mr. Crafton told me yesterday that Lord Glenham's mother is living, and that she fairly worships her son, and is particularly anxious that he should make a grand and suitable marriage. You would not wish to sow seeds of dissension between this mother and son, Cecil. I own, dear, that I see no prospect of your marriage with Lord Glenham."

Cecil sighed, and the pained look in her eyes deepened.

"Did you never hear afterward from the man who brought me here, uncle?" she asked.

"We received the annual stipend he had promised in Bank of England notes regularly each year, but he never sent one word of message—never, until to-day!"

Cecil glanced at the letter.

"Is that from him?" she asked.

"Yes; read it."

The girl obeyed. The old pastor closed his eyes, and leaned back in his chair. His face looked singularly worn and sorrowful in the dim light, and there was a weariness in its drooping features that told of extreme physical weakness. No one marked the rapid change of expression in the young face at his knee, the passionate anguish in the sweet eyes, the tense lines about the lovely mouth, the bitterness, horror, and despair indicated in all her perfect features.

The letter dropped at last from Cecil's hand, and the bright head drooped to the pastor's knee, while Cecil gave way to a burst of passionate weeping.

"My child," said the old scholar, arousing himself with his former bewildered expression, "hush, dear, you pain me. I would have kept this from you if I had dared. Lord Glenham may come back. Goodness, beauty, and genius are of more value than ancestry, and his mother may think so, too, and open her arms to you as to a daughter. Put the letter in your pocket. It may prove a clew some day."

He gathered up the bank-notes, opened his desk,

and took from an inner drawer a leathern pocket-book.

"Here are seven hundred pounds of English money," he said, putting the two notes in the purse—"all that your guardian ever sent me. This money is yours. Take it, Cecil. Keep it. No one knows what may happen. You may yet have sore need of it. I never used one penny of that man's money for you, dear. We looked upon you as our own, and so provided for you, and I kept this as a provision for your future."

Cecil put the purse and letter in her pocket, as he again enjoined her.

"The good wife and I had saved from our earnings before our marriage," continued Herr Brocken ; "but we furnished this house from our money, and used a portion to eke out my slender stipend as pastor. About fifteen hundred thalers still remain in bank to my credit. Gretchen has served me and mine faithfully for twenty years. She is old and alone in the world. The money I leave should go to her."

"Yes, uncle, but why do you say such things? You are well ; you will live many years. Do not think of death."

The pastor smiled tenderly.

"I should like to live for your sake, dear," he said. "But for my own, I would like to see again the good wife. You need me. You will be like a lamb in a den of wolves when I am gone. I fear

for you—I tremble to think what you would do without my care and this safe shelter. If anything should happen to me keep Gretchen with you. She loves you and will guard you with fidelity !”

“You speak as if you expected to die. Are you ill, dear uncle ?”

“Not ill, but very tired. And you are tired, too. The hour is growing late. There is only one thing more, and then you must go to bed, my darling.”

He took from the desk a small packet, which he opened.

“The good wife wrote out the history of your coming here,” he said, “and here it is. We both signed it. And the good wife, who was clever with her pencil, made that night, after your guardian’s departure, a sketch of his face. Here it is. It can do you no good, but as the man might have been your father, we preserved it for you !”

Cecil seized the paper eagerly, and stared at the picture with great devouring eyes.

It represented a young man with a fair, English face, a heavy, cruel mouth ; small, blue eyes, the left one having a peculiar droop ; and with a large mole on the left cheek. The face was hard, cold, and unpleasant, and Cecil shuddered as she studied it, feeling a quick sense of repulsion towards it.

“Do you think that he was my father ?” she asked.

“The good wife thought not. But he might have been. Men can be very cruel to their own flesh

and blood when they are supremely selfish. Keep the picture, dear. And now, Cecil, we must say good-night !”

Cecil arose, her anxiety dispelled by his placid look and gentle smile. Repressing her own emotion and agitation lest she should disturb him, she kissed him softly and moved towards the door.

As she lifted the latch he called her back.

“You have been a good child to me, Cecil,” he said, affectionately. “The world is full of perils and pitfalls, but God will guide and guard you !”

Cecil knelt down beside him, and he laid his hands on her head and blessed her. Then he embraced her tenderly, as she arose, and dismissed her.

The girl paused at the door and looked back at him with a vague anxiety, which was dispelled by the sight of his gentle, smiling face. She went softly up to her own room to brood over the story she had that night heard, and to wonder and weep in the passionate manner of youth, and to think of Lord Glenham, and finally to dream of him.

The old pastor leaned back in his chair, still softly smiling, his pain and anxieties vanished, a blissful peace pervading his soul. His long, scanty locks fell around his venerable face, and his eyelids drooped wearily.

“Poor little Cecil !” he said to himself, yet without seeming to realize his words. “I seem to have the gift of second sight to-night. A terrible future

yawns before her. Poor little one! God shield her!"

His smile deepened. The candle burned low and went out in a guttering noise. The shadows filled the study, and the night deepened, but still he did not stir. The kitchen clock struck loudly the hours as they passed, but he did not heed it. When morning dawned, he still sat in his easy-chair, his head thrown back, the gentle smile frozen on his features, which were rigid as marble.

The old pastor had gone to join his good wife. He was dead, and Cecil Rosse was left alone in the world to meet the terrible perils in store for her!



## CHAPTER IV.

MR. PULFORD.

Upon the northwestern coast of Scotland, in a grim, wild region, upon a high, precipitous bluff overhanging the seething ocean, sits throned a gray old castle, once the stronghold of a powerful Highland chief, who gathered his hosts of armed retainers within his walls in troublous times and bade defiance to his foes.

The marriage of the daughter and only child of its latest Scottish owner had carried the ownership of Castle Cliff into the possession of an equally powerful English family, that of the proud Marquis of St. Leonards.

The grim old stronghold had been skillfully modernized throughout half its extent without greatly marring its value as a relic of feudal times. The small slit-like apertures in the thick walls had been replaced by French windows, an oriel or two relieved the blank spaces, the stone floors had been replaced with oak, and other small improvements made, but the immense and cavernous chimneys

remained intact, the dusky old wainscotings had been polished like mirrors, and the battlemented towers were unaltered.

But Castle Cliff, with its air of desolate grandeur, was no longer a residence throughout the year. Lord St. Leonards visited it for a month or two nearly every autumn with a party of friends, shooting in the vast woods, deer-stalking and fishing ; but he had grander estates in England, and returned to them regularly with the coming of cold weather.

But the marquis was not expected at Castle Cliff this season. He was now seventy-five years of age, hale and vigorous still, and had by no means given up active pursuits and sports, but he had spent the summer at Vichy, in France, and was expected to remain there during the autumn.

He had written to his granddaughter, Lady Trevor, placing the castle at the disposal of herself and friends during the month of September, and her ladyship, with a dozen chosen companions, was already in possession.

It was the first week of September, a raw and chilly day, with a fine mist pervading the atmosphere, blotting out the distant features of the landscape and giving a funereal aspect to the woods and gardens, and to the dull, leaden-hued sea.

The gentlemen had gone out with dogs and guns at an earlier hour, before the mist had begun to fall, and were not yet returned. The ladies had retired to their rooms to read, to write letters, or to sleep.

Lady Trevor was in her own private sitting-room alone. The great chimney yawned like a cavern, and she had caused to be built in it a fire of resinous pine that filled the room with warmth, light, and fragrance. The heat had driven her ladyship to the oriel window, where she half reclined in a luxurious lounging-chair and idly watched the sea below and her yacht which rocked upon it.

Lady Trevor, the granddaughter and heiress of Lord St. Leonards, was the widow of a baronet who had had the reputation of being one of the worst scoundrels of his time. Sir Albert had been dead nearly two years, and his widow had re-entered society, creating a sensation by her beauty and wealth. She was always attended by an elderly companion, who was also a widow, and whose plainness of feature served as an admirable foil to her own beauty.

The baronet's widow was about thirty-three years of age, but owing to the skillful arts of the toilet appeared scarcely five-and-twenty. She was a tall, stately brunette, with an olive skin, flashing black eyes, abundant black hair arranged in the fashionable style of the day, and with a full figure which was set off to the best possible advantage by costly Parisian costumes. Haughty and imperious, with a passionate love of luxury and display, she was utterly devoid of the softness and sweetness which are woman's greatest charms, and was as hard and cold and glittering as her own treasured diamonds.

She was already dressed for dinner, although it was but five o'clock, and dinner would not be served until seven. Her robe was a combination of claret velvet and cream-colored silk, which was strikingly effective and very becoming to her. Her ornaments were of rubies, large, and of the true "pigeon's blood" hue, with hearts of ruddy flame and the glow of burning stars.

She had dismissed her maid and settled down to a survey of the gloomy sea and the drizzling mist, and to the enjoyment of her own thoughts. Tiring of these she pulled a bell, and when a servant appeared, commanded :

"Send Mr. Pulford to me."

The order was obeyed, and Mr. Pulford presently made his appearance.

He was a man of middle age, with a florid complexion, small grey eyes, keen and furtive in their glances, and a full sandy beard that concealed his mouth, completely covering the lower half of his face. There was something sinister in his appearance, in spite of his insinuating manner—something stealthy in his approach—something sly and secret about him that would have impressed a student of physiognomy with a keen distrust of him.

Yet he was a thorough gentleman in seeming, and was the trusted friend and adviser of Lady Trevor. He had been the business agent of her profligate and ruined husband, his favorite companion and friend, and was now the business-agent of her ladyship, her

secretary, her major-domo, the one person above all others whom she trusted—the only being whom she feared.

“Come in, Pulford,” said her ladyship, graciously, as he paused near the door. “Have the gentlemen returned from their shooting?”

“Yes, my lady,” answered Pulford, respectfully. “They came in an hour ago, wet to the skin.”

Lady Trevor turned her face away from the keen gaze of her secretary, and said, carelessly :

“Ah, by the way, Pulford, is Glenham Lodge yet occupied?”

Pulford's face flushed, as he replied :

“It is, my lady. One of the gillies was at the lodge this morning, and he says that Lord Glenham and Mr. Crafton, with a dozen other gentlemen, arrived this morning.”

“The distance is but five miles,” said the widow, as if to herself. “I should almost have expected Lord Glenham to call upon me—”

“In this rain, madam?” asked the secretary, with a slight curl of the lip. “His lordship may not be aware of your decided preference for him. If he is aware of it, it is evident that he does not return it.”

Lady Trevor turned upon her secretary a countenance white with anger.

“How dare you speak in that manner to me, sir?” she demanded, haughtily. “You forget yourself, Mr. Pulford. Repeat this insolence, and I will have

you thrust from my house—I will dismiss you from my service.”

Mr. Pulford smiled easily, not at all disturbed by this threat.

“It is you who forget yourself, madam,” he remarked, coolly. “Just reflect one moment. What would happen if you should ‘dismiss’ me from your service?”

The lady’s eyes quailed before his sneering look. Her anger gave place to fear.

“Of course I did not mean that, Pulford,” she said, in a constrained voice. “You are too valuable to me to be dismissed, but you must never speak to me in that manner again.”

“Perhaps it would be well for us to come to some sort of an understanding, madam,” remarked Mr. Pulford. “I served your husband faithfully for many years. I was his confidant, his bosom friend, his other self. When he died, nearly two years ago, I continued in my former business duties, attended to your estates, became your secretary, and was as meek and respectful to you as any servant. Is not this so?”

“Why should it not be so?” demanded Lady Trevor, imperiously. “Are you not paid a salary that many a nobleman would envy you? Are you not treated as my equal, admitted to my house and table at all times? Are you not here among my guests, equally honored with them?”

“True, and so far good, madam. But I have a

right to all this, and more than this. I am a gentleman by birth, and therefore you dare not offend me. Do you remember a conversation between you and me ten months since in Lord St. Leonards' country-house?"

The lady's eyes emitted a sudden flash of renewed anger.

"You do well to remind me of your insolence on that occasion, Mr. Pulford," she exclaimed.

"My insolence consisted in asking you to be my wife," said Mr. Pulford, quietly. "You were angry, I remember, but finally refused me on the ground that the baronet had been dead but a year, and that you dared not risk offending Lord St. Leonards, your grandfather, by a second marriage so soon. I respected your objections, and resolved to wait. I have waited. During the past ten months I have not breathed to you one word of love. But the time is now come when I must speak. Your growing preference for Lord Glenham demands my interference. It will be as well that our relations to each other should be settled definitely before Lord Glenham appears at Castle Cliff. And so I now renew my proposal of marriage."

"You forget yourself," cried her ladyship, haughtily. "How dare you address me in words like these? I your wife? Why, you must be mad!"

"Not so, madam," said Mr. Pulford, smiling. "When Sir Albert Trevor died, worn out with dis-

sipations, I resolved to step into his shoes, and I shall not be likely to relinquish the purpose I have sworn to accomplish. I am your paid servant, but also I am your master!" and his cold eyes glittered like drawn swords. "I await your answer to my proposal."

"It is impossible—utterly impossible!" cried Lady Trevor, excitedly. "I married Sir Albert Trevor against the wishes of my grandfather, who has never forgiven me, and has never since looked upon my face. The marquis is proud as Lucifer. He has never forgiven me for linking his noble, unstained name with that of the rouè and gambler, Sir Albert Trevor. He has permitted me to visit his estates—in his absence—but, in spite of all my letters, in spite of my widowhood, he still refuses to see me or forgive me. He always abhorred me from my birth, and now he regards me with a bitterness of anger that all my efforts have been unable to lessen. How, then, would he, this haughty old marquis, look upon my marriage with you, whom he regards, if he has ever heard of you, as my paid servant?"

"He would look upon it with horror, of course," said Mr. Pulford, easily, "but we could keep our marriage secret for the present. He is seventy-five, and cannot live many years at the best. I should not wish to risk his further displeasure with you, for he is likely, after all, to make you his heiress. You are his only descendant and the natural inheritor of

all his magnificent freehold property, bank accounts, stocks, and that sort of thing. His wealth, added to the immense fortune you inherited from your step-mother, would make you the richest woman in the world. You have schemed to win his favor, and you have hitherto failed, yet I cannot think that he will bequeath his unentailed property away from his rightful heiress."

"He must leave it to me," said Lady Trevor, with a greedy gleam in her black eyes. "I wrote to him asking the loan of Castle Cliff for the month of September. And I told him in my letter that Lord Glenham would be at his Highland box during the same month, and consequently my near neighbor. Lord Glenham was my grandfather's ward, the son of his distant kinsman and dearest friend, and the heir to Lord St. Leonards' title and entailed estates. Now if I were to marry Lord Glenham—"

"The marquis would take you to his heart. But this cannot be. I demand your hand in marriage, Lady Trevor. You must be mine. I love you, in spite of your pride, your domineering ways. I should be proud of you, with your handsome face and stately figure. And, more than all, I am determined to share your wealth. You dare not again refuse me—"

"I dare—"

"Remember that I hold you as in the hollow of my hand and can crush you as easily as I could crush an egg-shell," said Mr. Pulford, in a terrible

voice and with a terrible look in his eyes. "Do you dare me to do my worst?"

Lady Trevor shivered as with an ague.

"No, oh, no!" she whispered. "But listen to reason. I cannot marry you, Pulford. I should as soon think of marrying my footman. I will double your salary—I will help you to marry some lady of title, so that even your ambition will be satisfied—"

"I will marry you, Edith Trevor, and none other!" interrupted Mr. Pulford, with an oath. "You are in my power! I know your secret—the hideous secret—a revelation of which would doom you to prison, high-born lady as you are! Do you dare defy me? Do you again refuse to marry me? Refuse, and I'll expose your crime; I'll betray you to the police; I'll send you to the felon's dock!"

He hissed the words in her ears and stood gloating in anticipated triumph.

Lady Trevor cowered before him, and covered her white face with her hands.

A moment of tragic suspense followed.

It was broken by a knock at the door. Pulford started away and walked to a farther window. The baronet's widow raised her face, now white and haggard, as the door opened and a servant entered.

"The Marquis of St. Leonards has arrived, my lady," announced the lackey, "and desires to see your ladyship!"

"The marquis? My grandfather? Here?" cried

Lady Trevor, in an irrepressible agitation. "Show him up at once!"

The servant withdrew. Pulford approached the lady, with flushing face and glittering eyes.

"What could have brought Lord St. Leonards here to see you after having refused to look upon your face since your marriage fifteen years ago?" he demanded. "Something's in the wind. Perhaps he feels his age and desires to make peace with his only living descendant before he dies. Play your game well, Edith," he added, familiarly, "and all his wealth shall be yours."

"Go—leave me!"

"I will, but to-morrow I shall come to this room for your answer to my proposal of marriage. Dare to refuse me and I doom you to the felon's dock, the prison cell! To-morrow at this hour, and here!"

With an evil smile on his face, Mr. Pulford quitted the room by one door as Lord St. Leonards was ushered in at the other.



## CHAPTER V.

### COMPLICATIONS.

As the Marquis of St. Leonards was ushered into the private sitting-room of Lady Trevor, her ladyship arose, still white and haggard from the excitement of her interview with Mr. Pulford, and moved forward a few paces, endeavoring to summon a smile of welcome to her quivering features.

She had not seen her grandfather in fifteen years—not since her marriage with the profligate Sir Albert Trevor. As his lordship was now seventy-five years of age, she expected to behold in him some of the infirmities of age, but none were visible.

He was tall, straight, and vigorous as a man of half his years. He was large of frame, of imposing aspect and commanding carriage, with the appearance of a French military officer. His hair was snow-white, his heavy mustache was snow-white also, but his eyes were keen and piercing, his grand and haughty features were indicative of a passion-

ate soul and a powerful will unweakened by time, and his abundant vitality promised him a score of additional years. Lady Trevor could not conceal her surprise even under her mask of joy.

"Dear grandfather!" she faltered, holding out her hand. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I am delighted—more than delighted—to see you!"

"Humph!" said the old marquis, not taking her proffered member. "Resume your seat, Lady Trevor."

"May I not accept your presence here as a token of your forgiveness of my willfulness of fifteen years ago?" asked the baronet's widow, now mistress of herself, and eager to conciliate her powerful and wealthy relative. "Oh, grandfather, if you only knew how bitterly I have repented my foolish marriage, my madness in disobeying you, I know you would pity and forgive me! Dear grandfather, will you not love me again—your only living descendant?"

"Humph!" said the marquis again, studying her dark, handsome face attentively. "Don't appeal to me with sentiment, Edith. I never loved you and you know it."

This brusque declaration was only too true, and Lady Trevor, somewhat discomfited, sank down in her easy-chair, livid with chagrin.

The marquis remained standing, contemplating her with a smile that had something of mockery in it.

The state of feeling between Lord St. Leonards and Lady Trevor may be briefly explained.

The marquis had married early, and had had but one child born to him, a son, a noble, impetuous, wayward youth, who had been the pride of his soul, the very apple of his eye, and the source of many and bitter anxieties. The young man, Lord Harry Ravendale, had been excessively wild, but his crowning folly had been his marriage with a scheming adventuress, older than himself, when he was but twenty years of age. For this his father had cast him off, refusing to see or forgive him. The adventuress had made her husband's life a burden to him, had tortured him with jealousy, and brought him to such a condition of despair and remorse that he had seriously contemplated suicide.

And then, just a year after his marriage, as if Providence were satisfied with his punishment, his wife had died in giving birth to her child, the Lady Edith, and the repentant youth had returned to his father like the prodigal son, and had been received with open arms and a complete forgiveness.

He was re-instated in his father's house and heart. Completely cured of his wildness and waywardness, the young man became all that his father could desire, and years of quiet happiness followed. The Lady Edith was brought up in her grandfather's house, but she had the face and disposition of her adventuress mother, and the marquis never liked her.

It was the hope and prayer of Lord St. Leonards that his son should marry again, but the little Lady Edith was ten years old before her father contracted a second marriage.

The second wife of Lord Harry Ravendale was a perfect contrast to her predecessor. Of noble family, the possessor of a magnificent fortune, rarely beautiful, an orphan, she was lovely and affectionate in her disposition, a sweet, gentle girl, who won the love of her stern and haughty father-in-law, and who was to her husband a sufficient recompense for his previous sorrows.

Of this second marriage, some years later, was born one child, also a girl, who became the idol of the marquis. Never had he loved his own son as he loved the winning little beauty who climbed his knees and pulled his mustaches with baby lawlessness, and whose happiest moments were passed in his arms.

The young step-mother had endeavored to win the love of Lady Edith, but had found the task impossible. The girl was sly and secret, full of envy and frowardness. Even the father could feel no tenderness for her, and she crowned her shortcomings by an elopement and marriage with a dissolute baronet, Sir Albert Trevor, against whom her relatives had warned her.

Both father and grandfather declined to see her again, or accord her forgiveness.

At the time of Lady Edith's marriage she was

eighteen, and little Alba was two years old. Lord Harry Ravendale's young wife at this period contracted a serious cough, and her husband took her and his child to Italy for the benefit of the Southern climate.

Within a month thereafter Lord Harry died of malarial fever, and his remains were forwarded to England, and were buried in the Ravendale ancestral vault.

Lord St. Leonards was at the time prostrated with a severe attack of gout. The young widow's illness was increased alarmingly by her grief, and in her helplessness and misery she wrote to Lady Trevor to come to her.

Lady Edith obeyed the summons, accompanied by her husband. The step-daughter nursed the young widow for several months, and then the poor lady died, breathing blessings upon her nurse, and committing to her charge her little orphan child, enjoining her to convey little Alba to England with all speed, and place her in Lord St. Leonard's charge.

It is needful here to state that Lord Harry's widow made a will during her last days, leaving all her wealth to her daughter Alba, with reversion to the Lady Edith, her step-daughter, should Alba die unwedded before attaining her majority.

Lady Trevor set out for England, and by a round-about course, with her little sister. She spent some weeks in Switzerland, and other weeks in Germany,

and months in France, ostensibly for the improvement of her health, which she alleged to have been impaired by her long attendance upon her step-mother. Meanwhile, the marquis chafed and fretted at home, still imprisoned by his malady. Finally, he sent an agent to take the child from Lady Trevor. The agent found the baronet and his wife, with Mr. Pulford, the baronet's friend and business-man, at a Paris hotel, enjoying the pleasures of the capital. He demanded the child. Sir Albert Trevor rang the bell, and ordered the nurse to bring in the little one. The nurse, a big Flemish woman, who had recently been engaged by her present mistress, obeyed.

The marquis's agent started at sight of the child and turned pale. Here was no bright, debonnair little creature such as he had expected to see, but a thin, ghostly child of three years, with wan eyes and hollow cheeks, and with the shadow of death hovering over it.

"She has inherited her mother's feebleness of constitution," said Sir Albert Trevor. "My wife did not like to take the little wreck home to Lord St. Leonards, hoping that she would grow better. As you see, we have waited too long. The child is dying!"

He spoke truth. Before sunset the child was dead. Her remains were taken to England and there interred. The marquis sent his curse to Lady Trevor for her delay in rendering up her charge

into his care, declaring that she had died of neglect, and that Lady Trevor was her murderess.

The baronet and his wife entered into possession of the wealth thus acquired. They took a prominent place in society. They lived in great state, and were envied and courted. Then, years later, Sir Albert Trevor died.

During all these years the marquis had never seen Lady Edith. After her husband's death she wrote to the old lord, throwing all the blame of her shortcomings upon Sir Albert, and professing an agony of repentance and remorse, and he so far relented in his treatment of her as to permit her to visit his home once in his absence, and now to spend a month with her friends at Castle Cliff.

It may be imagined, therefore, with what mingled emotions of fear, hope, and timidity Lady Trevor now beheld him.

What was his object in seeking her? Had he come to reproach her after all these years? Or was he tired of his loneliness and childlessness, and was he willing to forgive her and acknowledge her as his heiress?

"It is many years since we met, Edith," said the marquis, coldly. "You have changed little in looks. I suppose you are the same at heart. I did not come here with any romantic notions of love and forgiveness, as you possibly imagine, but for reasons of my own, which you will know."

"But will you not pardon my errors?" asked Lady

Trevor, with an energy of pleading that was not all affected. "Grandfather, I have suffered from our estrangement. I am alone in the world, a childless widow. Why will you not suffer me to minister to your declining years, to be to you a loving daughter?"

She half rose, stretching out her hand to him.

He waved her back with an imperious gesture.

"Why?" he demanded, bitterly, his black eyes flashing upon her a scathing glance of scorn and loathing. "Because a little child's grave lies between us, a barrier that can never be crossed, never! When I think of little Alba, the darling of my old age, the child of my love and hopes, I could curse you again, Edith Trevor, as I cursed you years ago. You made my life desolate. You robbed me of her—you murdered her—"

Lady Trevor recoiled with a low cry, her face white, her eyes full of fear and horror.

"I did not!" she ejaculated, vehemently. "How can you accuse me of such a crime? Am I not of your own blood? Was not the child my sister? How dare you accuse me of murdering her?"

"You and your unprincipled husband, Sir Albert Trevor, planned to take advantage of your step-mother's will—a will which doubtless you persuaded her to make. In her condition, dying in a foreign land, her husband already dead, she was your prey, and you fattened upon her like the vampire you were. But for my illness of months at that time, I

might have saved the child," and the marquis groaned heavily. "You kept her from me. You planned her death—"

"Grandfather !"

"I have been to Rome recently," said Lord St. Leonards, fixing his burning gaze upon his granddaughter with a steadiness that made her quail. "I have traced your route home with the child—"

Lady Trevor gasped for breath. A new terror seemed to overwhelm her. She stared at the old lord with wild and horrified eyes.

"I have found that you dismissed at Rome the faithful nurse of little Alba, on a trumped-up charge of theft," continued the marquis, "and that you hired an Italian nurse, whom you took with you to Switzerland—and that you kept her some weeks in your service, taking her to Vienna, where you dismissed her upon the ground of incompetence. And then, for some weeks, the child had no other nurse save yourself, you professing to find no one sufficiently trustworthy to take charge of her. You, with Sir Albert Trevor and a bosom friend of his, named Pulford, went wandering about Germany, visiting different baths, ostensibly for the child's failing health. You stopped at Baden—"

Lady Trevor clasped her hands in the attitude of one awaiting sentence of death.

"And then you procured another nurse for her, a big Flemish woman, who had just been discharged by her former mistress, and who was a stupid crea-

ture, with a vacant face and slow, heavy movements, unintelligent, a mere animal, the last person in the world to whom should have been entrusted the care of a delicate child. You proceeded to Paris and plunged into gayeties, while Alba, consigned to the Fleming's mercies, was dying. My agent arrived to take her from you, but too late. She died on that same day. The suspicion has often haunted me that you poisoned the child."

"Grandfather, how can you speak such words to me?" exclaimed Lady Trevor, recovering from her cowardly prostration, as if a terrible burden had just been removed from her. "You would accuse me of poisoning my step-sister?"

"I said that the suspicion had haunted me, but I must acquit you of that crime. The French certificate of death, and the examination I caused to be made upon the arrival of the little body in England, proved that she died of marasmus. But none the less do I believe you to be the cause of her death. The little frail body had not been well nurtured. You had neglected her, ill-treated her, and deliberately planned her death that you might inherit her wealth! That I do religiously believe!"

"You wrong me, grandfather. My stepmother was very kind to me. When all others looked coldly upon me she tried to win my love. When I was cast off by you and my father for my foolish, willful marriage with Sir Albert Trevor, she pleaded for my forgiveness, although she pleaded in vain. And



EDITH SAT LONG IN THE RUDDY LIGHT.—See Page 86.



when she lay ill in a foreign land, she sent for me and clung to me. She confided her child to my care. I could never have repaid her love and trust by the awful crime of which you suspect me !”

“ You were poor. Sir Albert Trevor was a ruined profligate who had wedded you in the expectation of receiving a fortune with you. He was a bad man, a villain and a scoundrel. You inherited your mother’s lawless nature. Guided by Sir Albert Trevor, I believe you would have been capable of any crime. I acquit you of poisoning the child, but I believe that you schemed against her life, that you planned to inherit her wealth, and that her loss lies directly at your door and that of your dead husband !”

Lady Trevor put up her hand to hide her convulsed features. An expression of terror was imprinted upon them, with a look of guilt which it was well for her that the stern old lord did not see.

The marquis walked to a distant window and stared out upon the leaden-hued sea, and the yacht half-blotted out of sight by the gray, thick mist, and made a powerful effort at self-control. The sight of Lady Trevor had aroused all his bitterness of soul. His bitter wrongs at her hands aroused him to fury. But presently he calmed himself outwardly and returned to her, with a face cold and hard as marble, and eyes as keen as sword-thrusts.

“ Enough of the past,” he said. “ The sight of you brought it all back and aroused all the venom

within me. It is barely possible that I may have wronged you. If you have the blood of that adventuress in your veins, you are also my son's child and should have something of his noble nature. You mentioned in your letter to me, requesting permission to visit Castle Cliff, that Lord Glenham would spend this month at the Lodge," he added, turning the subject abruptly. "Directly after I received your letter rumor came to my ears that Lord Glenham was your suitor. Is this true?"

Lady Trevor straightened herself from her cowering attitude, and assumed an air of coquetry in striking contrast with her recent abjectness.

"Rumor speaks too soon," she said, settling her bracelets. "Lord Glenham has certainly not yet proposed for my hand, if that is what you mean."

"He is years younger than you—"

"But looks older," said Lady Trevor, with a complacent glance at an opposite mirror. "I do not proclaim my age, grandfather, and Lord Glenham does not think me greatly his senior."

"Is there truth at the bottom of the rumor? Do you like him?"

The brunette face flushed. The full curves of cheek and chin, the sensuous lips, the glittering black eyes, all quivered and softened with feeling.

"I do like him," she assented, with an affectation of frankness. "More, I love him better than I love any one else. He has paid me many attentions, but has never professed to love me. A month in

the Highlands will, I hope and believe, bring him to my feet."

"Humph!" said the marquis. "If you are really what I often believe, I'd rather see him dead than your husband. But if I have wronged you, his love may make of you a good woman. Glenham is the noblest of men, a grand and generous soul, made to win men's reverence and a woman's worship. To receive him as my grandson would give me a new hold on life—a new and great joy, such as I never expected to experience. As you know, he has a great fortune in his own right, is a baron, and, coming of a distant branch of my family, will at my death become Marquis of St. Leonards, and the possessor of my entailed estates. He will be Marquis of St. Leonards and Earl of Glenham, one of the richest men in England. His wife will have a brilliant destiny!"

"I know it," said Lady Trevor, "and I intend to become his wife!"

The old lord paced the floor restlessly.

"I will come to the chief purport of my visit," he said, presently, with some effort. "I should never have seen you again, Edith, had it not been for Lady Glenham."

"Lady Glenham!"

"She wrote to me at Vichy. She is very proud—as proud as I, myself. Knowing her son to be the next in line of inheritance to my title, and for other reasons, she wrote to say that she would like to

bring about a marriage between my granddaughter and her son. The rumor had reached her ears, also, of an engagement between him and you, and that rumor set the current of her thoughts in your direction."

"I am grateful to the countess," said Lady Trevor, reddening with delight, "the more so that she has never seemed to like me. My mother's character and my husband's profligacy have always seemed to make her cold and distant to me. What can have changed her so?"

"A simple cause. She looks upon her son's marriage with you as infinitely better than one he contemplates. He does not love you, Edith, although you may think so. He has fallen into the toils of an adventuress, just as my son did. These noble, unsuspecting natures are most easily imposed upon. Lord Glenham has fallen in love with a nameless woman, a person whose very birth is unknown, and he desires to marry her, and begs his mother not only to receive the girl as her daughter, but to go to Germany and see her. Was ever such madness? It is the old story of my son over again."

The stern and haughty face of the marquis grew sterner and haughtier as he continued his walk. Lady Trevor, with sudden pallor, leaned back in her chair.

"Impossible!" she whispered.

"It seems," continued the old lord, "that the girl sent the earl away for a year—a streak of coquetry,

of course. No doubt she did it to deepen his ardor, and expects him back by every train. But, being honorable, he took the stipulation in good faith. He is determined to marry her next year, and will do so unless the girl is proved unworthy, or something intervenes. I cannot bear that the earl's life should be wrecked, or that he should graft a low adventuress upon his noble line. So I came to you, Edith, to tell you that you have a rival, and that Lady Glenham would be happy if her son were to make you his wife. If you have any influence over him, if he has any affection for you, persuade him to give over his hair-brained folly and to consider his mother's happiness."

"I will. What is the woman's name?"

"Lady Glenham did not mention it. She was in great distress, as you can well imagine, and did not enter greatly into details. We understand each other, Edith. If you marry Lord Glenham I am willing to be on friendly terms with you, and shall make you my heiress. I will remain at Castle Cliff a day or two, as I shall call upon Lord Glenham to-morrow. And now, as the hour is growing late, I will dress for dinner. The butler informed me that my room was unoccupied, and I ordered a fire to be made in it, and sent my valet up to lay out my clothes. We will discuss Lord Glenham further after my visit to him."

The old lord bowed in stately fashion, and withdrew from the room. Lady Trevor was left alone

with her perplexities, pale and troubled, with a trembling shrinking from the future.

“What am I to do?” she asked herself. “I love Lord Glenham, and he loves an adventuress. Pulford has sworn to marry me, and I hate him. Yet I am in his power. He could crush me at a blow. I am more afraid of him than of death itself. What can I do? I will not marry Pulford. I will marry Lord Glenham. Upon my marriage with the earl hangs love, Lord St. Leonards' favor, everything I value in the world. Yet, if Pulford were but to be angered at me, he could plunge me into ruin and despair, into disgrace, and a felon's cell. What answer shall I make to Pulford to-morrow? I stand upon a frightful precipice, where a false step means death.”

She brooded over her situation, and her shrinking from the future grew upon her into a deadly terror.



## CHAPTER VI.

### ADRIFT.

When Cecil Rosse entered the pastor's study upon the morning after his revelation to her of her history, she was startled at seeing him still in his arm-chair, his head thrown back upon the cushions in an attitude of weariness. A stray sunbeam came through the window, resting lovingly upon his gray head. That peaceful smile was still on his thin and gentle face, but the kindly eyes that had ever beamed upon her in tenderest love were hidden by the drooping lids. She thought him sleeping.

"Uncle!" she said, softly, wondering if he had sat up all night, or had risen early and been overcome with drowsiness.

The sweet voice met no response.

"Uncle, dear!" said Cecil, coming nearer to him. "It is time for prayers! Why, how still he seems! How strange he looks, as if he had seen an angel before he slept! Uncle, darling—"

She touched his cold and lifeless hand, and the

chill contact sent a startled thrill, a curdling horror, through all her veins. In the next moment her wild cry went piercing through the house, bringing old Gretchen in haste from her domain.

The villagers were called in and thronged the house. One grave, gray-bearded peasant, who served as the village leech, examined the pulse and tested the rigidity of the dead pastor's limbs, and announced that he had been dead several hours. The smile on the face and the peaceful expression of all the features attested that his death had been painless, a transition from sleep and pleasant dreams on earth to a glorious awakening in heaven.

The next three days were very dreary to young Cecil Rosse. The villagers came and went softly, careful not to disturb her. Old Gretchen was very tender to her. A new pastor, a young man, appeared in the village, and came once or twice to offer the ministrations of religion and to counsel her to resignation. But Cecil was not unresigned. After the first natural outburst of her grief, she rejoiced, rather than sorrowed, that her benefactor had rejoined his good wife, and that his death had been so nearly a translation. She would have regarded a morbid and passionate indulgence in grief as selfishness, and schooled herself to bear her sorrow bravely and uncomplainingly.

Upon the third day, at the hour of sunset, Herr Brocken was buried in the little churchyard beside his wife. The funeral over, Cecil walked homeward

beside old Gretchen, both clad in sable garments. The old serving woman, whose eyes were red and swollen with tears, regarded her young mistress with frequent sighs. The lovely face of Cecil was very grave and sorrowful ; the sweet, sad eyes had in them a look of intense weariness ; but, more than all, there was an expression of utter hopelessness about the tender, drooping mouth—a strange despair—that singularly contrasted with her youth.

They entered the empty house. Some one had opened doors and windows to the evening breeze and brought flowers to brighten and relieve the gloom. Cecil sat down in the little sitting-room, and old Gretchen removed her young mistress's hat.

"You must not give way like this, Miss Cecil," said the old servant, tenderly. "The Herr Pastor would not like it. He is happy—think of that, my lamb."

"I know it, Gretchen," responded the girl, drearily. "I would not have him back, but somehow my life seems to have come to an end with his. I cannot look forward to any future. And he loved me, Gretchen. I was as dear to him as if I had been the noblest-born lady in the land. No pride could ever have come between him and me."

Old Gretchen looked bewildered.

"You will make yourself sick if you go on like this, Miss Cecil," she said. "Here comes the new

pastor and the chief villagers to console you in your sorrow."

Cecil moved nearer the window. The sunset light fell upon her hair, transforming it into a glory. Her red-brown eyes, with the golden glint in them, were turned towards the door. Her proud, sweet mouth quivered with ineffable sadness. Her superb young beauty and patrician air struck the visitors, who halted at the door for an instant, and removed their hats, entering her presence with low salutations.

Old Gretchen placed chairs for them, and remained standing.

"We came," said one of the men, the leader of the party, a skillful wood-carver and the principal layman in the church, "to talk of business matters with you, Miss Rosse. It is impossible for you and Gretchen to remain in this lonely parsonage longer. The silence and gloom would be too oppressive to you."

Cecil bowed her head in assent.

Herr Wilstein breathed a sigh of relief.

"The new pastor has already been appointed to this church," he continued, with a glance at the minister, who, embarrassed, and full of pity for Cecil, awaited the conclusion of the visit with uneasiness. "He has a large family and has been without a charge. For the sake of this flock bereaved of their shepherd, he is willing to come to Zorlitz at once!"

"We can leave the house to-morrow," said Gretchen, briefly.

"The new pastor is willing to buy your household goods at a fair valuation," pursued Herr Wilstein. "As your friend, Fraulein, and the friend of our dear dead pastor, I will arrange your business affairs for you, with your permission."

"I shall be grateful to you for your kindness," answered Cecil. "I leave the business affairs in your hands."

"The new pastor will arrive with his family this week, and take possession of the parsonage," said Herr Wilstein. "I desire to offer to you and Gretchen the shelter of my roof, so long as you may choose to honor us with your presence."

"And I," said the new pastor, a round-faced, nervous little man, with spectacles, "shall be glad to have you remain at the parsonage so long as may be agreeable to you, Miss Rosse. I speak for my wife as well as for myself."

"You are both very kind," said Cecil; "I thank you both, but I have barely considered my future. This change has been so sudden that I am quite bewildered. Still, I think that I shall leave Zorlitz!"

"Leave Zorlitz?" echoed Herr Wilstein.

"I have no relatives here," said Cecil. "I cannot earn my support here. My dear uncle educated me that I might be fitted to cope with the world. Perhaps he foresaw for me this hour. I cannot live

without employment, and that employment I shall best find in some great city."

Herr Wilstein shook his head disapprovingly.

"It will be like sending a lamb into a den of wolves!" he exclaimed, using the comparison that had been on the lips of the dying pastor. "You might stay here and learn to carve wood and teach song-birds, as our maidens do. You might—"

The new pastor shook his head gravely. He saw more plainly than the other the difference between Cecil Rosse and the peasant maidens of Zorlitz.

"You can no more keep her here, my friend," he said, "than you can keep an eagle in a wren's nest. She must decide for herself, and may God direct her choice!"

"But the world is great and sinful. The maiden would be safe here from all harm. Herr Brocken's niece should not go forth alone, unguarded—"

"She won't go alone!" interrupted Gretchen, stoutly, her rugged old face lighted by a glow of love. "I nursed her in her childhood; she has been the darling of my life; she is friend and child to me; and where she goes, I will go!"

Cecil flashed an affectionate look into Gretchen's kindly face, and the matter was settled between them that whatever changes life held for Cecil, they were not to be separated.

The visitors at length departed, but others came. Offers of a home for Cecil and her old servant were plentiful, but the girl gently and gratefully declined

them all. The simple peasants heard with regret her determination to leave Zorlitz. They would miss surely the bright presence that had gladdened their homes, the gentle nurse who had ministered to them in sickness, and the friend who had rejoiced in their joys.

"But I shall come back next year," said Cecil, remembering Lord Glenham's promise of return in a year. "You will see me next summer."

When the visitors had all departed, and the shadows of the evening deepened, and doors and windows were shut, and a single candle lighted, old Gretchen re-entered the presence of her young mistress.

"This is to be our last night in the dear old house," said the old woman, sighing. "It is hard to go."

"The home is broken up; the house is but the empty nest, Gretchen," said Cecil.

"Where shall you go, my precious? To Vienna? To Munich? Perhaps to Berlin?"

"Gretchen, my dear uncle told me my history the night before his death. I am English born. If I am to earn my living, if I am to leave this dear home, where should I go but to my own people?"

"To England?" cried Gretchen, amazed at the audacity of the idea.

"To England, Gretchen!"

"But you know no one there except the two

English gentlemen, Lord Glenham and Mr. Crafton. You are not going to seek them?"

The girl's face was dyed with blushes.

"Can you ask me that, Gretchen?" she demanded. "Lord Glenham is my lover. He will come for me to Zorlitz, next summer, and I shall be here then. Until then I shall not see him. I am going to England to work and to wait. I have seven hundred pounds which was sent to uncle for my support by the man who brought me here. That is mine, and I shall not scruple to use it."

"There will be the money from the sale of the furniture."

"That must belong to you. There are fifteen hundred thalers in the bank also for you. Uncle told me that he had intended that sum as a provision for your old age."

"It should be yours, Miss Cecil."

"No; uncle left it to you as a token of regard for all your years of faithful service. Say no more, Gretchen, on that point. I cannot plan my future. I do not know what I shall do in England, but our plans will develop after we arrive there."

She arose and kissed the old woman, who embraced her fervently, and then she went up slowly to her own room.

The next day the transfer of the household goods was made, and the money in payment therefor, through the kindness of thrifty Herr Wilstein, was paid into Gretchen's hands. The day was spent by

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mistress and maid in a complete round of visits through the village, and that night they slept at the house of Herr Wilstein.

Upon the next morning they made their last adieux and departed from Zorlitz.

“I hope,” muttered old Gretchen, looking back at the forest village through her tears, “that we ain’t rushing straight into trouble! And yet a creeping feeling comes over me that there are dark days ahead! I wish I could read the future!”



## CHAPTER VII.

### LADY TREVOR'S RESOLVE.

Lord St. Leonards presented himself at the dining table punctually at half-past seven, at which hour dinner was served. His distinguished appearance, his immense wealth, his lofty position in society, rendered him the lion of the occasion. His arrival at Castle Cliff was a source of great conjecture to Lady Trevor's guests. Her ladyship's long estrangement from her grandfather was well known in society, and his unlooked-for visit was generally interpreted as a sign of reconciliation between the pair. He made himself agreeable to the guests, was witty and brilliant, although often caustic in his speeches, but upon the return to the drawing-room he pleaded fatigue and withdrew to his private apartments.

Lady Trevor was congratulated by her friends upon her apparent restoration to the marquis' favor, and she replied gayly as if the matter were quite settled. Scarcely a person present but envied

her. Still young, handsome, immensely rich, a widow with many suitors, she seemed now to stand in the very flow of fortune's favors. With the marquis' unentailed property added to that she already possessed, she would be the richest woman in England.

She appeared to appreciate her good fortune, was unusually gay and full of laughter, but beneath that surface-brightness beat a heart as heavy as lead, a heart torn with conflicting and terrible emotions.

A sword more keen than that of Damocles seemed suspended above her head. A deadly terror, a sickening apprehension, held her in thrall. All the good things of life, all that she held most dear and precious, were just within her grasp or held alluringly before her eyes, yet her possession of them was menaced ; a great peril yawned before her ; ruin, ignominy, and a felon's doom stared her in the face.

She was at the mercy of a man who knew no pity ; she could purchase safety only by surrendering her freedom and with it all dreams of love, pride, and ambition, and becoming the wife of a man whom now she loathed and hated.

Mr. Pulford saw beneath her mask of gayety the conflict going on within her. He smiled grimly in the covert of his sandy beard, and his pale grey eyes gleamed with prospective triumph, and he thought in his heart :

"She will yield. What else can she do? She is

in my power and will never dare defy me. She is a coward, and conscious guilt makes her weak. She will fume and fret, struggle a little, and then, with an ill-grace, most likely, announce her submission. By Jove, I'm a lucky fellow ! I shall step into the shoes of my late employer, shall marry Sir Albert's widow, and share in the possession of the great fortune of the deceased Lady Ravendale. I also shall become the grandson-in-law of one of the proudest peers of England. I shall be master of my lady's estates, and finally proprietor of Lord St. Leonards' ancestral domains ! I shall become the friend and companion of peers. More, I may become a peer myself. With all my money and influence, having married the marquis' granddaughter, why may I not aspire to a peerage ? But for Lord Glenham, I might step into the St. Leonards' succession. All these things will arrange themselves after my marriage, which must be urged forward with all speed. I intend to enter upon the London season at my house in town with my bride, in the character of a man of society !"

He regarded Lady Trevor with a critical gaze, as if she were already his possession. Her brunette face could not be termed beautiful, applying the word in its highest sense. It lacked the rare nobility, the exquisite radiance, the purity of expression that glorified the perfect features of young Cecil Rosse. It was the face of a woman of the world, handsome, sensuous, with hard, black eyes and rosy

lips and flushed cheeks, with the smile of a siren and an air of well-bred repose, and Mr. Pulford's eyes looked approvingly upon it. He could be proud of her as his wife. Her appearance would reflect credit upon him and make him envied by the men whose companionship he intended to secure for himself in the new life opening before him.

"A brunette is my particular admiration," he said to himself. "I always thought Lady Trevor uncommonly handsome. What control she has over herself! She's laughing now, yet I, and I alone, know that at heart she is in a mood to gnash her teeth and tear her hair. Well, fret it out, my lady. By to-morrow night I may find you sullen enough, but I'll warrant you'll be docile!"

Lady Trevor avoided her suitor throughout the evening. At eleven o'clock the party separated, the members proceeding to their various rooms. Mr. Pulford departed with the rest, taking up his bedroom candle from the hall-table, and smilingly ascending the great stair. Lady Trevor was left alone in the grand and stately drawing-room, and she paced to and fro, her smiles all vanished, her eyes glittering, her mouth set in a hard, rigid line.

"What shall I do?" she asked herself, in a wild despair. "What can I do?"

No light dawned upon her during the next half hour. She kept up her walk, a hunted look grow-

ing in her eyes, and a desperate resolve gathering strength within her heart.

The butler appeared, at length, fancying that her ladyship had retired, and he started back at the lurid light in the eyes she turned towards him, at the haggard look on her features.

"I beg pardon, my lady," he exclaimed, "but I fancied you gone, and I came to blow out the lights!"

"Very well," responded Lady Trevor. "I was just going to my room!"

She passed him with stately tread, crossed the hall, and ascended the stair to her own apartment.

A fire of pine knots and cones was blazing on the hearth of her sitting-room. A couple of wax-candles, in silver sconces, were lighted upon the mantelpiece. The curtains were drawn, and the oriel window hidden from view. Lady Trevor flung herself in an arm-chair and stretched out her hands to the blaze. The night was wet and chilly, and she shivered as if the cold were that of mid-winter.

Her maid, a sallow-skinned Frenchwoman, with gliding movements and a somewhat secretive countenance, entered from the adjoining apartment. The woman had been in Lady Trevor's employ for some years, and although she knew nothing of her mistress' secrets, yet the two being not unlike in disposition, they were upon unusually good terms with each other, considering the great difference in station between them.

Lady Trevor submitted to the ministrations of her attendant, exchanged her dinner-dress for a scarlet cashmere dressing-gown, trimmed with swan's down, permitted her long, black hair to be brushed and simply arranged for the night, and then said :

"That will do, Cerise. I shall want nothing more. You may go to bed."

"Madame looks ill," said the Frenchwoman. "Shall I not remain—"

"No, no," said Lady Trevor, impatiently. "I want nothing more to-night. You may go."

The maid obeyed, taking her departure.

Then the lady walked to her window, drew her curtains, and looked out into the wet and starless night. All was blackness, relieved only by the gleam of light from the lantern at the mast-head of the yacht in the harbor below. She turned from the contemplation of that outer darkness and sat down again by the fire.

"I am in the power of this man Pulford," she said to herself, her face growing harder, her eyes more desperate. "I cannot see my way out of this danger. I must try to buy him off, even if I have to pay him half I have. If he refuses money I must temporize. I must gain time. If he push me to the wall, I will turn upon him like a tigress, and rend him in pieces! One thing I swear—I will never marry him!"

She drew her breath hard, and her features glowed

with a baleful light that indicated the warring evil passions within her.

"I must secure Lord Glenham during our stay in Scotland," she mused. "If I can but induce him to speak some words of interest and admiration, if I can but obtain the faintest pretext, I'll spring a trap upon him by pretending to misunderstand him, and will force him into an engagement of marriage. He liked me—I know he did. He has tried to reconcile my grandfather to me. I think I might have won him but for this foreign entanglement. Who is this adventuress whom he desires to marry? I must hear the whole story, and it will go hard if my woman's wit and woman's wiles do not succeed in securing him to me! It's a great thing in my favor that both my grandfather and his mother desire him to marry me. I have a difficult double task before me, to win a man who does not love me, but does love another woman, and to rid myself of Pulford, a dangerous and powerful enemy, whom I fear and loathe!"

She sat long in the ruddy light of the flaming fire, pondering upon these problems. The pine-knots burned to ashes and the heat became slowly dissipated, yielding to chill and damp, and still she sat there, dark and desperate, with gleaming eyes staring straight into the shadows of the far corners, and wicked thoughts deepening and strengthening in a wicked and horrible resolve.

The little Sevres clock on the mantelpiece chim-

ing the hour of two aroused her at last from her reverie. She arose, pallid and shuddering, casting fearing glances over her shoulders.

"If I am forced to it," she whispered, "I shall defend myself at all hazards. Horace Pulford little knows with whom he has to deal."

She undressed herself and crept into her bed in the adjoining chamber, but it was a long time before she could compose herself to sleep. Yet when Cerise entered the room at a late hour on the following morning, her mistress was slumbering as tranquilly as a little child, with no token of a guilty conscience on her placid face, or in her careless attitude.

At ten o'clock Lady Trevor arose and dressed for breakfast. She descended to the dining-room. The gentlemen had breakfasted early and gone out upon a shooting expedition, the day being fine. The ladies were lounging about the table, perfect freedom to rise early or late, and breakfast at any hour that might be preferred, being the law Lady Trevor had established at Castle Cliff during her reign over it.

Lord St. Leonards had breakfasted in his own room, and had not yet made his appearance, as Lady Trevor ascertained by inquiry. She took her place at the table, showing no trace of the cares that lay heavy upon her, and enacted the part of hostess with her usual ease and grace.

After breakfast two of the ladies went out upon

the rocks, sketch-books in hand. Others retired to the library, or set out for a "constitutional" in the woods or along the coast. Lady Trevor summoned her cook, a *chef* brought from her own house, to a private conference, and having arranged the *menu* for the dinner, considered her housekeeping duties quite fulfilled, and sauntered to the morning-room.

There was a fire here in the great chimney-place. The castle having been closed since the previous year, and the principal rooms unoccupied, it was deemed safe to have fires in all the rooms to dispel the lingering damp and chill, and this practice was found decidedly pleasant. Lord St. Leonards was the sole occupant of the room at the moment of Lady Trevor's entrance, and he was standing before the hearth, grave, stern and haughty, his steel blue eyes glittering coldly under his frost-white brow, his attitude expressing something of desolation and stern self-repression. He looked as unapproachable as a Sphinx, yet Lady Trevor, feigning affection for interest's sake, rushed towards him, full of animation, her hands outstretched, with an affectation of girlishness which she found frequently effective.

"Good-morning, dear grandfather!" she exclaimed. "I hope you rested well."

"Very well, thanks," responded the marquis, coldly. "I always rest well. I shall ride over to Glenham Lodge this morning to see the earl, but I had a few words to say to you first. Did I tell you

last evening that Lady Glenham is intending to visit her son at the Lodge?"

"You did not mention it, grandfather."

"I thought not. She expected to arrive there, accompanied by one or two lady friends, this evening. It will be well for you to call upon her to-morrow. Her stay will be brief, not over a week."

"I will call to-morrow, grandfather. Shall you speak to-day to the earl about this foreign adventuress with whom he has fallen in love?"

"Certainly. The countess assures me that I have great influence over her son, and has begged me to exert it in the attempt to wean him from this foreign woman. I scarcely needed her urging. I love Gordon almost as if he were my son, and I cannot bear that his life should be wrecked as my son's was wrecked. I shall reason with him, plead with him—yet where his mother has failed how can I hope to succeed?"

"Shall you speak to him about me?" asked Lady Trevor, looking down at the fire.

"I do not quite know. Lady Glenham desired me to suggest—Edith, Gordon is the noblest fellow alive. I don't think you worthy of him—"

"You are complimentary, sir."

"I am truthful," said the marquis, grimly. "You were a disobedient daughter, an unfaithful friend. I am haunted by doubts of you that I scarcely dare own to myself. I believe that but for my daughter-in-law's unfortunate will, your step-sister might

have been alive to-day. Perhaps I wrong you. God grant it may be so. It does not seem credible that one of my blood can be a murderess !”

Lady Trevor, with a livid pallor, drew angrily away from him.

“How can you speak so to me ?” she demanded. “I am a defenceless woman and your grandchild, therefore at your mercy. But it does not seem to me manly to strike at one so helpless, to accuse me of awful crimes. My step-mother trusted me. I am not so base as to betray a trust. The child was my step-sister, a baby of two or three years, a little, winning creature who loved me. And you think I could kill her ! Great heaven ! how shall I defend myself from such a hideous charge ?”

She twisted her hands together as in an agony of grief.

“Perhaps I have wronged you, Edith,” said the marquis, somewhat softened. “God grant it may be so. Yet it rankles in me that you should have kept the child from me so long after the mother’s death—”

“The child was ill. I knew you worshiped her, and I could not take her to you puny and ailing.”

“She was ill when you left Rome with her after her mother’s death ?”

Lady Trevor gave quick assent.

“But I have been to Rome lately, to the lodgings my son and his wife occupied,” said the marquis, slowly. “I saw the old landlady with whom they

lodged, and she told me that the child was well and healthy."

Lady Trevor trembled and looked scared.

"It is so long since—nearly fifteen years—that she forgets," she muttered. "Surely you wouldn't take an Italian landlady's word against mine? Shall I swear that the child was ill when her mother died? Shall I swear that I never harmed one hair of her little head? You have said to me yourself that the physician declared her disease marasmus. He had no suspicions of foul play. The post-mortem examination revealed no ground for these doubts and accusations of me."

"No, they did not. There was disease. The doctor assured me that she had not been poisoned," acknowledged the marquis. "But the little, wan, rickety body that was brought home to me seemed so unlike the bonny, beautiful child I loved, that I have always thought that she must be fed on baleful drugs. Your husband, Sir Albert Trevor, might have done this without your knowledge. He was a scoundrel and a villain."

"He is dead and cannot defend himself, but with all his faults he could not have done what you surmise. He was a coward; he would not have dared commit a murder. Grandfather, you have wronged us both—"

"Perhaps so. Yet you were poor, and little Alba's death made you rich. I may be pardoned, knowing the stock you sprang from, and knowing

so well your husband's reputation, if I have feared the worst. I will try to believe your denials of guilt. I will try to believe you good and honorable, though still my mind misgives me. Yet how can a woman, and that woman the daughter of my noble son, be guilty of a horrible crime? We will say no more, Edith. I will endeavor to have faith in you."

"And you will not believe me unworthy of Lord Glenham?" asked Lady Trevor. "Grandfather, I will own to you that after my early infatuation for Sir Albert passed away, I grew indifferent to him. I never really loved him. Lord Glenham has been very kind to me, for your sake, of course, yet I fancied that he was growing to like me. And so I—I grew to like him!"

"I understand. If anything I can do, in a delicate way, can further your wishes, I will remember. And now, Edith, I must go. My horse and groom are waiting."

He made no offer to caress her. He exhibited no sign of affection, but coolly drew on his riding gloves while she watched him intently, and then, with a courtly bow, he took his departure.

Lady Trevor watched him from the window as he rode away from the castle, followed by his groom.

"How straight he sits his saddle!" she thought. "How much vigor and life he has, yet he is seventy-five years old. He does not look fifty-five. He is good for twenty years yet. But, of course, accidents may happen—he may die of fever—and his great

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estate be distributed within a year. I begin to stand some chance of sharing his inheritance. He doubts me still, I see, yet imagines he wrongs me by the doubt. He will use his best influence in my behalf with Lord Glenham, and I am persuaded that the earl will hear to reason. But if I win him, how am I to dispose of Pulford? If I am pushed to the wall," and she set her lips in a hard, tense line, and her eyes gleamed, "I resolve anew, what I resolved last night, *I shall defend myself at all hazards!*"



## CHAPTER VIII.

### TREACHERY.

Glenham Lodge, situated about five miles distant from Castle Cliff, is a picturesque stone house of considerable dimensions, with peaked roofs and clustering chimneys, throned upon a mountain-top, looking perched in mid-air, and commanding a magnificent stretch of scenery, mountains, valleys, and distant sea, in one wide stretch of vision.

It is a veritable eagle's eyrie, an actual "castle in the air," rudely caressed by the fierce Highland winds sweeping in from the sea, and is more often known as Breezy Lodge than by the name of its owner.

Upon the morning on which the old Marquis of St. Leonards set out to ride to Breezy Lodge, but at a far earlier hour, the young Earl of Glenham sat at the breakfast table with his guests.

The entire party were in shooting costume with the exception of Maldred Crafton. They were all in good spirits, the weather being fine, and anticipated a fine day's sport.

The Highland gillies, or servants, with dogs and guns, were outside, in readiness for a start.

The young gentlemen hurried through their breakfast and disappeared from the room. The earl, their host, was about to follow them when Maldred Crafton detained him.

"Give me a few minutes, Glenham," he said, his swarthy face wearing a slightly embarrassed expression. "I have something particular to say to you."

"Well, what is it?" asked the earl, pleasantly. "You are not in shooting dress? Are you not going out?"

"I think not. The fact is, Glenham, my letter this morning contains news that necessitates my return to London. I shall be obliged to run up to town again for a few days."

The young lord settled back in his chair, not concealing his surprise.

In the week that had passed since his departure from Zorlitz he had grown graver, and there was a care-worn expression at times in his eyes that indicated a heart not quite at rest.

He loved Cecil Rosse with all the ardor of a passionate soul. He had never loved before, and to this love was given all the reserved strength of his great and powerful nature. He had hastened back to England and sought an interview with his mother; but she had heard his story with alarm, had reasoned and expostulated with him, and, in

her pride and affection for her son, had denounced Cecil as an adventuress. The two who had been all in all to each other theretofore had parted in coldness, the earl declaring that nothing could shake his resolution to marry Miss Rosse, provided Miss Rosse would accept him. The son had then set out in a leisurely manner for the Scottish Highlands, and the countess had written in haste to Lord St. Leonards at Vichy, begging him to use his influence with her son to prevent his intended disastrous alliance.

Lord Glenham's grand, blond beauty contrasted singularly with the sinister countenance of his chosen friend. His keen blue eyes searched the swarthy features of Crafton, who moved uneasily, conscious of acting a part upon this occasion, and guiltily apprehensive of discovery.

"I am sorry to hear that you must go back when you have just arrived, old fellow," said the young lord. "Why don't you write, telegraph, or send a messenger, anything rather than go? The shooting will be fine, and to tell you the truth, Crafton, I am not in a jovial mood, and depend on you to help me entertain my guests."

"Do not urge me. My business concerns my country-place," lied Crafton. "It's a business matter, you see, Glenham. I won't bore you with it; but the fact is, my return to town will make a difference of a hundred pounds a year to me. You are rich, and that sum is not worthy your consideration ;

but it is quite a matter of moment to me who have only six hundred a year !”

The earl's reply was prevented by the entrance of a servant with a telegram.

“From my mother,” said the young lord, perusing it when they were once more alone. “It has been forwarded by mounted messenger from Inverness. She is coming here with a couple of friends and will arrive to-night !”

“She repents her opposition to your wishes, Glenham,” said Crafton, unable to conceal his bitterness, “and is coming to announce her readiness to set out for Germany post-haste.”

“You don't know my mother,” declared the earl, with a sigh. “She is coming to renew her arguments against my desired marriage with Miss Rosse. I cannot convince her that Cecil is not an adventuress, and she will not consent to go and see her. I am more sorry than before that you must go away just at this time, Crafton. You could help convince my mother of her mistake. She considers me blinded by passion. Now if you, who cannot be suspected of being Miss Rosse's lover, were to assure my mother that Cecil is a lady, pure and lovely, and worthy my mother's love and respect, she might be induced to visit Germany to see her.”

Crafton turned his head aside and made a grimace. He, who was also a lover of Cecil Rosse, found Lord Glenham's words particularly distasteful.

“I cannot hope to influence Lady Glenham's

decision," he said. "What she will not do for the son whom she adores, she won't do for a man she dislikes. Don't protest, Glenham. You know that the countess is not fond of me, and she is not likely to consider my opinion of any great value. But to return to Miss Rosse. Will your lady mother's opposition change your plans in regard to her? Shall you marry Miss Rosse if Lady Glenham continues her opposition?"

"I have not given up hope of obtaining my mother's consent. If Miss Rosse will honor me by becoming my wife I should wish that my mother should become her mother also, and give her the love she so richly merits," declared the young lord, gravely. "I reverence my dear mother, and would not willingly offend her. But I cannot forget that I am eight-and-twenty—old enough to choose for myself, and that my happiness for life is involved. I cannot consent to be guided in a matter of the most vital importance to me by a mere whim—a whim the more unreasonable because my mother does not wish to be convinced of her injustice."

"If you feel like that, why don't you rush back to Germany and marry the girl off-hand?"

"Because I gave to her guardian my word of honor that I would not seek to marry Miss Rosse under a year. And because, also, I do not like to quarrel with my mother. By waiting patiently a little I may be able to win my mother to consent to see Miss Rosse, and if she once sees her she will

love her. Cecil is very young, Crafton, yet I am almost sure that she loves me. The year will soon pass, and I shall hasten to her and ask her to become my wife," and the earl's fair and splendid face was all alight. "I have given my word, and I must keep it, yet I intend to write to Herr Brocken and ask permission to come to Zorlitz at Christmas. He cannot refuse me."

Crafton's face darkened, and he moved his chair impatiently.

"Well," he said, trying to speak carelessly, "in the course of a year you'll be able to bring Lady Glenham around to your opinion. She will give in within six months, mark my words. She loves you too much to hold out against you."

"You don't know her pride," again affirmed the young lord. "She has made great plans for my future, and desires for me a brilliant marriage, in the worldly sense of the word. If she would only consent to see Cecil, I would have no fears, but she will not see her. So, you abandon me when I need you most, Crafton? When will you return?"

"Next week. I have ordered a horse from your stables to take me on my journey towards civilization. He'll be sent back from some point upon my route to-morrow. Don't let me detain you longer, Glenham. The fellows are growing impatient!"

They exchanged a few further words, shook hands, and parted, Crafton leisurely making his way

to his own room in high good humor, and the earl, after giving orders to have certain rooms warmed and aired and put in readiness for the expected ladies, joining his guests and departing upon his day's expedition.

Crafton gazed out after them with exulting eyes.

"Glenham's an unsuspecting fellow," he muttered. "I wonder what he'd say if he knew all the truth—that I am also Miss Rosse's lover, and that I have sworn that she shall be mine? I wonder what he'd say if he knew that this business upon which I'm going is not what I pretended, that I shan't stop in London, but that I will go on to Zorlitz and to the bewitching beauty of the Black Forest? I came up here with him to make sure that he was safely disposed of for the month. Now I shall hasten to Germany, secure in his absence, and it will be strange if the lover who is present cannot cut out the absent one! A few pretty gifts, some pretty flatteries, and I shall win the prize!"

He packed a hand-bag rapidly with as few necessities as possible, and returned to the dining-room, where he waited until his horse was brought around.

Then he mounted and set out upon his journey through the wild and rugged Highland scenery.

A little after midday he halted at a solitary farmhouse, procured a dinner and exchanged his horse, making arrangements for its return, as also for the return of the one he had brought from Breezy Lodge.

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About the middle of the afternoon, he passed a heavy traveling-carriage drawn by four horses. There were three ladies within, reclining wearily among the cushions, and as he dashed past he caught a glimpse of a noble face framed in by gray hair, which face he recognized as that of the Countess of Glenham.

The ladies looked out of the coach-window, aroused by the unusual event of meeting a horseman, and Crafton was tempted to turn back and address them.

"I might find opportunity to say a word or two to Lady Glenham to strengthen her dislike of Miss Rosse," he thought, "but I can wait. It will be better to do that when there are no listeners. I wonder if she knew me?"

He dashed over a level stretch of road of brief extent, new schemes of treachery filling his mind.

That night he slept at a little hamlet. By the next noon he arrived at Inverness.

He took the first mail-train to the southward. On arriving in London the next day he made no stay, but pushed on for the Continent.

"Now for Zorlitz!" he said to himself, with sinister delight, "and for Miss Rosse! While Lord Glenham keeps his promise to the old pastor and tries to reconcile his lady-mother to his expected marriage, I will step in and win the game!"



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BETROTHAL.

The visit of Lord St. Leonards to Glenham Lodge was fruitless. As he drew rein before the door of the picturesque mountain-house, after a hard ride up the steep and rugged road, he was informed by a Highland gillie, in kilt and cap, that the earl had gone out upon a shooting expedition, and that he would not return until evening. Leaving his card, the marquis turned about and began his return to Castle Cliff, saying to himself :

“I shall have to remain another day, in any case, in order to see the countess, so I am not sorry to miss Glenham this morning. I dread the interview. How am I to convince an ardent young lover that the lady he loves is an adventuress? If his mother and I join forces and attack him together, we shall be more likely to succeed.”

He returned to Castle Cliff, where Lady Trevor anxiously awaited him. As he crossed the hall, she opened the door of the morning-room and looked

out upon him. She was quick to read the expression of his face, and her own countenance fell.

"Glenham was out shooting," remarked the old lord, cheerfully, and passed on, ascending the stair.

Lady Trevor followed him, and went on to her boudoir, where she locked the door and spent some time in meditating upon the situation of her affairs.

In spite of the perils menacing her, her spirits rose, as did her courage. She believed that she was mistress of the situation, that she could control her enemy, and gain the accomplishment of her dearest wishes.

"Now that Lady Glenham and Lord St. Leonards conspire to bring about my marriage with the earl," she said to herself, "I stand an excellent chance of becoming his wife. I am quite sure, if I manage well, that I shall leave Castle Cliff, at the end of the month, as his betrothed wife ! But how am I to keep Mr. Pulford quiet?"

She bestowed much serious thought upon this question, but made no modification of the plan which she had so carefully elaborated upon the previous evening.

To Mr. Pulford's surprise, Lady Trevor was in excellent spirits at luncheon, presiding at the table with grace and ease, and betraying not the faintest sign of secret care or trouble.

"Is that unconcern all feigned?" he asked himself; "or does she think that my claims can be set aside? We shall soon see."

The larger number of the gentlemen of the party had gone out shooting. Lady Trevor proposed, immediately after luncheon, that those who remained should, with the ladies, go upon a sailing excursion in the yacht. The plan met with general approval, and half an hour later the ladies, in yachting costumes of blue flannel ornamented with gold braid, were escorted by Mr. Pulford and another gentleman down the rocky cliff to the sea. A boat had been sent ashore from the yacht to receive them, and they were transported to the deck of the larger vessel, which spread her sails and put out to sea.

Lord St. Leonards did not join the excursion, preferring to rest in his own room.

Mr. Pulford had expected to receive the answer of Lady Trevor to his suit before evening, but she carefully avoided him while on the yacht, and if she had not done so he would not have there addressed her on the subject that occupied his mind.

The wind was strong, blowing from the eastward. An hour's run took them nearly out of sight of Castle Cliff. Then the yacht put about, but the wind was in her teeth, and the remainder of the afternoon was spent in beating, approaching the shore by degrees.

It was six o'clock and nearly dark when the vessel crept into her harbor. A fine rain was falling, and the air was chilly. The castle lights gleamed through the wet gloom like fire-flies. The

party, wet and cold, landed on the slippery rocks and hastened up the cliff.

In the great hall of the castle, where a host of retainers had assembled in feudal times, in the great chimney-place, a pine-wood fire was blazing, its ruddy glow reflected against the dusky wainscoting of the walls and the polished black oak floor. The excursionists gathered around it and made merry for a little time, and then withdrew to their various rooms to dress for dinner.

Lady Trevor vanished with the guests, and Mr. Pulford departed to his chamber, content to bide his time.

At dinner Lady Trevor, in a delightful toilet, was in fine spirits, as she had been at the preceding meal. She avoided Mr. Pulford throughout the evening, without seeming to do so. Lord St. Leonards dined with his granddaughter and her guests, but immediately afterward returned to his own apartment. Music and conversation filled the next few hours. Those gentlemen who had gone out shooting had met with fine success, and rehearsed their exploits with satisfaction. At eleven o'clock the guests retired and Lady Trevor was left alone.

She stood before the hearth a few moments in the warm, well-lighted room, and was then about to retire also, when Mr. Pulford reappeared. His society smile still lingered on his face, but his eyes were keen and eager in their scrutiny, and there was

an air of expectant triumph about him that Lady Trevor did not fail to observe.

"I have looked forward to this hour since yesterday," he said. "At last we are alone together, and I am to receive your answer to my suit. Be seated, Lady Edith."

He placed a chair for her before the hearth and she sank languidly upon its silken cushions. He leaned against the mantelpiece and contemplated her. The ruddy glow of the fire lighted up her features, making her look unusually handsome. Her jewels, of which she wore a profusion, gleamed and glowed and sparkled like drops of imprisoned fire. Mr. Pulford smiled complacently. He waited a full minute for her to speak, and then said :

"It is scarcely necessary for me to recall to you my declarations of yesterday, Edith. I am here to receive your answer to my demand for your hand in marriage."

"That demand," responded Lady Trevor, calmly, concealing her irritation at his familiarity of address, "I need not say was a complete surprise to me, Mr. Pulford. More, it was an actual shock. I had looked upon you as the faithful friend of Sir Albert and myself, as my paid business agent, and I should as soon have dreamed of marrying my coachman—"

Mr. Pulford's florid countenance flushed a sullen, angry red.

"Take care !" he cried, warningly. "You will do well to remember that I am a gentleman by birth

and breeding, that I am here as your guest, the equal of yourself and your other guests, and that I shall resent an insult, even if it comes from you !”

Lady Trevor bowed, smiling.

“I shall remember,” she replied. “I merely wished you to understand how completely I was surprised by your proposal of marriage. I have considered the matter thoroughly, and have decided to be frank with you. I had planned another marriage for myself—”

“I know. You desired to marry Lord Glenham ?”

“A marriage with Lord Glenham would be more suitable for me,” acknowledged Lady Trevor, composedly. “He has rank, wealth, position to match my own, whereas everyone would wonder if I were to marry you. My grandfather, who is becoming reconciled to me after our long estrangement, especially desires me to marry his heir. Now, I will make terms with you to secure my continued freedom. I will pay you an annuity of five thousand pounds—”

Mr. Pulford snapped his fingers.

“I will give you a fine estate—”

“I want everything, not a portion,” interrupted Mr. Pulford, frankly. “I want you, Lady Trevor, for my wife. I want all your wealth in present and in the future. You understand ? I will make no terms whatever. I demand your unconditional surrender.”

Lady Trevor set her teeth together firmly, so that her lips were compressed and bloodless.

"I gave you credit for more sense than you are now displaying," said Mr. Pulford. "You do not seem to realize how completely you are in my power. Do you need to be reminded that I hold a secret of yours, the revelation of which will send you to a felon's cell?"

"Hush! Don't speak so loud."

"Shall I rehearse to you the particulars of a crime committed by you fourteen years ago?" continued Mr. Pulford, grimly. "Refuse me, madam, and instead of allowing you to become the bride of Lord Glenham, I'll send you to Newgate to stand your trial for a terrible crime. I'll strip you of your honor, of your great wealth you schemed to gain—"

"Hush!" interrupted Lady Trevor, looking nervously over her shoulder toward the door. "Why blame me for the crime Sir Albert planned—"

"And which you helped him execute. I'll prove you an unnatural sister, a monster of hypocrisy, deceit and wickedness, and justice will be meted out to you. In place of your dainty silken garb, you'll wear the prison uniform. In place of your spacious chambers and soft bed and skilled attendance, you'll have a narrow cell, hard toil, ignominy—"

"Oh, stop, stop! You need no longer threaten me—"

"You consent to marry me?"

"Since I am forced to do so."

Perhaps it was as well for Mr. Pulford's peace of mind that he could not see the baleful gleam in Lady Trevor's eyes, at that moment shaded by her hand, or the terrible expression that writhed about her mouth.

"We are betrothed, then, Edith?" he exclaimed, in a tone of satisfaction. "You will exchange the name of Lady Trevor for that of Lady Edith Pulford—when?"

"I have given up my ambitions and my love because I dare not do otherwise," said Lady Trevor, in a hard voice. "But I surrender to you, making one single condition. The engagement must be kept a profound secret between you and me so long as we remain in Scotland, and for a fortnight after our return to England."

"You make conditions? Suppose I refuse?"

"Then I'll dare you to do your worst. And if I am put in a felon's dock, I'll denounce you as my accomplice; I'll swear that you and Sir Albert forced me to commit the crime. I was but the weak instrument of your will and his."

Mr. Pulford started back, his face changing.

He had set his heart upon an immediate announcement of his betrothal to Lady Trevor, and her unlooked-for acuteness had placed an obstacle in his path.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "You are sharper than

I gave you credit for. Why do you make this condition?"

"On account of my grandfather. Lord St. Leonards cast me off because of my first marriage, and has never seen me since until now. He is intensely proud, and were he to learn of my engagement to marry you he would again disown me, and the fortune I hope to inherit from him he would leave elsewhere."

"But how can six weeks' delay reconcile him to our marriage?" asked Mr. Pulford, suspiciously.

"I shall try to keep him here a week, and shall exert myself to win his love and confidence. When I return to England, I expect to go to St. Leonards, his own home. Two weeks there, in constant companionship with him, will complete the task I begin here. He will like me, grow to depend upon me, and will consent to our marriage!"

Mr. Pulford regarded Lady Trevor with doubt and suspicion, but her eyes met his frankly, and she looked honest and sincere.

"The extra fortune is worth trying for," he remarked, thoughtfully. "Six weeks' delay can make but little difference. I will wait."

"Thank you. In the meantime, you are not to betray the secret of our engagement to a living soul."

"I promise."

"And you are not to criticize my actions. I desire to make the most of my last days of freedom. I

shall receive Lord Glenham here. I shall do as I please in every respect."

"I consent. Make the most of your six weeks of freedom, for punctually to the day I shall announce our engagement. And within a month thereafter you will become my wife."

"There is nothing more to say, I believe," she remarked. "We drop the subject here—to renew it six weeks hence."

Mr. Pulford approached nearer to her and suddenly bent and kissed her. She drew away haughtily, but commanded herself by a great effort, and concealed much of her anger and repulsion.

"Good-night, Edith," said her suitor. "You will do well to reconcile yourself to the inevitable. I am not a patient man, and I shall require my wife to treat me with respect and at least a semblance of affection."

He kissed her again in a triumphant fashion and then withdrew.

Lady Trevor drew out her pocket-handkerchief and rubbed her cheek fiercely.

"How dare he?" she muttered. "I hate him. Rather than marry him I'd kill myself. I've six weeks of grace. Much may happen in six weeks!"

She paced the drawing-room with hurried tread, her eyes gleaming, her breathing short and quick.

"Six weeks;" she repeated, in a low whisper. "In six weeks I shall be free from him forever. For in six weeks, Horace Pulford will be dead!"



## CHAPTER X.

### GETTING TO WORK.

It was a rainy evening in London. The street lamps glimmered a sickly light through the gloom. The houseless poor huddled in doorways and under arches. Business men pressed rapidly through the streets, under shelter of their umbrellas. Cabs rattled busily over the pavements, scarcely one to be seen unoccupied. A few shops remained open, but no customers were to be seen before the counters. London was at its dreariest, seeming a great, desolate wilderness, without comfort or cheer within its wide boundaries.

It was on this night, in the wet and gloom, that Cecil Rosse and her old servant, Gretchen, arrived at Charing Cross station to begin their life in England.

Gretchen had learned a few words of English, but found herself helpless in emergency. As the pair stepped out upon the lighted platform, it was Cecil who took the lead. She was as ignorant of the world as her peasant companion, but her quick wit, super-

ior intelligence, and quiet observations had already acquainted her with the proper mode of procedure. She had bought on the journey a Bradshaw's Guide, and had studied it attentively. As she now paused with Gretchen, a little dazed by the lights and confusion, her eyes rested on the long line of fast-filling cabs. She signalled a "four-wheeler," and approached it. Her luggage was secured and piled on top, and Cecil and Gretchen entered the vehicle.

"What hotel?" asked the driver.

Cecil named a hotel which she had selected from the advertisements, and the cab whirled out of the station into the wet and dreary streets.

As Gretchen and her young mistress looked out of the windows, both experienced a sensation of home-sickness.

"I hope we have not done foolishly in leaving dear old Zorlitz," sighed the old German woman. "How desolate and strange it looks! If we were ill here, who would care for us? Yet if we were ill there, every villager would wait upon us and nurse us back to health."

"If you are ill I will take care of you, Gretchen," responded Cecil, with forced cheerfulness. "It does look cheerless, I own, but this is England, my native land, and I ought not to feel as if I were a foreigner. We shall soon be settled and feel at home here, and living in London will be a grand experience for us. Think of the good villagers who have never quitted

Zorlitz in all their lives ! How they will stare at you next year when we go back !”

This view of the case brightened old Gretchen, who settled herself comfortably in her seat and began to anticipate the glories of her return to Zorlitz as a traveled person—one who had seen the world.

The cab drew up before a little private hotel in a quiet and respectable street. The cabman pulled the bell, and Cecil and her servant alighted. A housemaid, in white cap and apron, opened the door to them, and led the way up-stairs to a small parlor. Then she summoned the proprietress of the house, a portly woman in black silk, who rustled in and who “took stock” of her guests with a pair of very keen eyes.

It was impossible, however, to see in Cecil anything but a lady, young, very beautiful, very innocent, and in Gretchen anything but the honest, solid, German peasant woman. The landlady signified that she had suitable accommodations for them, and sent a porter to discharge the cabman and bring up the boxes.

Cecil was presently conducted to a small upper room, with a high, four-post bedstead and old-fashioned furniture. A large, light closet, with a single bed, adjoined, and was intended for Gretchen's accommodation.

The cheerlessness of the rooms was something oppressive. Cecil rang the bell and ordered tea

and toast to be sent up, and over the tray the young mistress and her servant chatted, the former resolutely cheerful, and the latter trying to throw off the gloom that had settled upon her.

"We will find lodgings to-morrow," said Cecil. "That's the proper thing to do in England, Gretchen. It is cheap, too, and we can keep house after a fashion, and you shall make our tea and toast, and we will have a little home for ourselves and be happy."

"And if we get tired of London we can go back to Zorlitz. We have got plenty of money, Miss Cecil. We need not work unless we choose. I have the money the Herr Pastor left me all sewed in my stays. Still," added the old woman, prudently, "I'd like to keep that as a provision for my old age—"

"Then we must work. It will be better for us both to work. I shall turn my accomplishments to use, Gretchen; but we will not be separated."

Cecil presently retired to her high bed, and Gretchen vanished into the inner room.

The sun was shining when they awakened the next morning. After breakfast Cecil ordered in three or four of the morning newspapers, and eagerly studied the lists of "Lodgings to Let." She cut out most of these, ordered a cab, and, taking Gretchen with her, went out to secure her future home.

She had a hard task before her, and after several

hours' search returned to the hotel disheartened—and unsuccessful.

After dinner she requested to see the landlady in the little hotel-parlor. The proprietress came in at once, and Cecil plunged into her story without delay, desiring advice.

"I have been out to-day to find lodgings," she said, frankly. "We thought they would seem more homelike than a hotel. I cut the advertisements out of the newspapers, and we have been a great many miles in the cab, but we found no rooms to suit us."

"That is singular," replied the hotel-keeper. "Was it that you were difficult to suit?"

"Perhaps so," answered Cecil, with a little hesitation. "We wanted three rooms—a parlor and two bedrooms—in a respectable house and street, at a moderate price."

"I should have thought they would have been easily found."

"We found several lodgings which we liked," said Cecil, "but the keepers of them demanded references. And we had no references."

The landlady looked at her lodger doubtfully.

"That is singular," she commented. "Do you know no one in London?"

"Not a soul. We come from Zorlitz, in Germany, where my good uncle, the pastor of the Lutheran church, has just died," explained Cecil, sorrowfully. "I am of English parentage, and being left alone,

naturally desired to come to England. Any of the villagers, or the new pastor of Zorlitz, would answer for us that we were honest and good."

"Your face declares that for you, Miss," said the landlady, who had conceived a great liking for the beautiful young girl. "You are much too pretty, if you'll excuse me, to be wandering about to all sorts of houses in answer to advertisements. If you wish, I'll find lodgings for you. In fact, I know of rooms that will suit you precisely, and the landlady, Mrs. Thomas, is my own sister."

"You are very kind, and I thank you."

"Oh, not at all, Miss. The truth is, a hotel is no place for you. At my sister's you will live more private-like and retired. If you wish I will take you around to her house directly."

Cecil assented and ordered a cab. The three entered it and proceeded to the address which Mrs. Carey had given the driver.

"It's a most respectable locality," said the hotel-proprietress, as they were whirled along over the pavements—"Number Four, Queen's Crescent, Argyle street, Bayswater—and most genteel, with a solicitor living next door, and a doctor at Number One, and a rich city merchant at Number Seven. And my sister has a fine set of lodgers, a young medical student, a professor of music, and a curate—quite professional, I tell my sister."

Queen's Crescent, Argyle street, Bayswater, proved to be a very clean and quiet region, with an

air of respectability about its dull brick houses. The Crescent fronted a section of park-like ground enclosed with an iron railing. There were no shops of any kind in the vicinity, a fact which Mrs. Carey pointed out with pride.

The cab stopped before Number Four and Mrs. Carey led the way up the walk to the door. She plied the knocker vigorously, and a maid appeared, giving them admittance. Mrs. Carey ushered Cecil and her servant into a parlor and hurried away in quest of her sister.

She returned a few minutes later accompanied by Mrs. Thomas, a stout, red-faced person, with a kindly, good-natured face which was very attractive to Cecil. Mrs. Carey effected the necessary introductions, and said:

"My sister says that she thinks her rooms will suit you, Miss Rosse, if you don't mind the third floor. The drawing-room floor is let to a family, but there are rooms above that have been recently left vacant."

"Come up and look at them," said Mrs. Thomas, charmed with the beauty of the young girl, and with the winsome manners that always won friends for Cecil. "They are newly furnished."

Cecil followed the landlady up two flights of stairs to a front room upon the third floor. It was a spacious chamber, fitted up as a parlor, and possessed three windows looking out upon the park-like enclosure in front of the Crescent. The carpet was

of crimson figures on a gray ground ; the furniture was of crimson rep, and there were two framed engravings on the white walls. A neat little bedroom, overlooking a small courtyard, adjoined, and the cleanliness of this latter chamber was apparent at a glance. A smaller bedroom at the rear end of the hall adjoined this, and was deemed suitable for Gretchen.

"I like these rooms," said Cecil, "but I fear they will be beyond my means."

"I will let you have them for a guinea a week, Miss Rosse, although I have had thirty shillings for them," said Mrs. Thomas. "Attendance is included ; that means that your food will be cooked for you in my kitchen by my cook, and served to you in my parlor."

"I will take the rooms," said Cecil, after a brief conference with Gretchen. "But I am a stranger in London, and can give no references. Can I not pay in advance instead?"

She took out her pocket-book, extracting from it a sovereign and a shilling, and tendered the money to Mrs. Thomas, who took it with a smile.

"When can I come?" the girl asked.

"As soon as you please. The rooms are ready for occupancy, and they are now yours."

"Then I will come to-night—"

"You had better stay now, Miss Rosse," said Mrs. Carey. "I will send your boxes to you. It is not necessary that you should return to the hotel."

Cecil acted upon this advice and removed her hat and jacket, taking possession of her new quarters. Gretchen returned with Mrs. Carey to the hotel, and came back in the cab with the boxes. Mrs. Thomas brought up a supper of toasted muffins, tea, marmalade, and cold meat, and waited upon her new lodger with her own hands. Then she explained her system of housekeeping, and Cecil placed a sovereign in her keeping to be expended for table supplies.

The next morning, after breakfast, Cecil and Gretchen sat down to consider their future mode of living. Both deemed it advisable to keep their little fortunes for age, illness, and pressing need. Both were anxious to work. Mrs. Thomas came in in the midst of the conference, and Cecil appealed to her for advice.

"What can you do, Miss Rosse?" inquired the landlady, with interest.

"I can teach music, French and German, and the usual branches of education," said Cecil. "I understand mathematics very well indeed. I can paint and draw, embroider, and make lace, and many fancy things that young ladies are taught to do in Germany."

"Would you like a situation as governess?"

"Not as resident governess. I must not be separated from Gretchen," answered Cecil. "If I could do something to pay our current expenses I should be very glad."

"Embroideries in silk or wool sell well," said Mrs. Thomas, meditatively. "If you could do something in that line it might be sold. There's a rage for embroideries at present."

"I will buy materials and go to work this very day," said Cecil.

"Then let me advise you to go to a first-class shop in the fashionable shopping quarter," said Mrs. Thomas. "Go to Regent street for your materials, and possibly you can find sale at the same place for your work."

Cecil thanked the landlady for her advice, and as soon as Mrs. Thomas had departed she went out with Gretchen. A cab conveyed them to Regent street.

"We must go by omnibus hereafter," said Cecil. "We shall soon understand the system of omnibuses."

The cab drew up before a fine shop, with plate-glass windows, and Cecil alighted. A shopwoman, handsomely dressed, came forward to wait upon her. Cecil made known her wishes, and patterns and wools were spread before her.

"Do you ever buy these when completed?" asked Miss Rosse.

The shopwoman looked surprised. The proud, young face, and patrician air had led her to believe her customer one of importance, and there was a perceptible difference in her manner as she responded :

"That is not our way of doing business, Miss. We have several embroiderers in our employ, and they execute all orders."

"If you desire to add to the number of your embroiderers, I should like work," said Cecil, gently. "Here is a sample of my work."

She displayed a strip of cashmere elegantly embroidered in silk. The design was her own, and simply exquisite. The work was marvelously fine and beautiful. The Herr Pastor's wife had been skilled in the arts of the needle, and Cecil's taste and talent had made her productions superior to that of her teacher.

The shopwoman examined the strip, which was a portion of a dress Cecil was embroidering for herself, and exclaimed :

"Why, this is the real French work. Excuse me ; I wish to show it to madam."

She carried it into an inner room, and presently returned, inviting Cecil to enter. Miss Rosse followed her, finding herself in the presence of the proprietress of the establishment, a stout, dark Frenchwoman, who would have received her with an air of patronage but that the girl's unconscious dignity compelled her respect.

"Your work is very fine, Mademoiselle," said the shopkeeper. "I can give you plenty to do, with very good pay. I have an order on hand for a baby's cloak in white cashmere, and as it is for one of my best customers, who is very particular, and as

my best embroideress is fully occupied with work taken before this came in, I have been compelled to keep the lady waiting. Who designed this work of yours?"

"I did it," replied Cecil, modestly.

"Then make me a design for the cloak. I will pay well for it if it suits me. And you shall have the task of embroidering the garment. I can give you constant employment."

"I had expected to find work only with difficulty," said Cecil. "I am a stranger in London, and where there are so many women out of employment who have always lived here, it seems strange that I should get something to do at once."

"It is not strange, Mademoiselle. The trouble with most people who do not get work is, that they cannot do anything well. A skilled workwoman can always get work. There is room for first-class milliners, dressmakers, and people of other trades everywhere at good pay, if they will seek their place and do their best in it. When will you bring the design?"

"I should like two or three days in which to perfect it, but I may come sooner."

The interview was thus concluded and Cecil returned to the cab and Gretchen. After directing the driver to proceed to a stationer's, the young girl exclaimed:

"It is all right, Gretchen. I am sure of good pay and plenty of work. This is better than going out

as governess. We shall be always together, and I won't be obliged to enter strange houses and meet strange people."

At the stationer's Cecil procured drawing materials, and they returned to Bayswater.

The girl entered upon her new task with enthusiasm. She made an elaborate design, weaving into it a score of graceful and dainty fancies. Roses and buds and trailing vines grew under her pencil into a creation of marvelous beauty. Her task was finished the next day, for she sat up late that night to work upon it, and she carried it to Regent street, Gretchen attending her. The French shopkeeper was quite delighted with it. Her keen eyes were quick to detect the artist's genius in the beautiful creation, and she congratulated herself on having obtained a prize in Miss Rosse.

When Cecil quitted the shop, she had made an engagement with its proprietress by which she would be more than able to pay her current expenses and those of her servant. Gretchen carried the little parcel of cashmere and embroidery-silks. As they passed out into the street, Cecil looked for an omnibus to convey them home.

The two were standing upon the curbstone, when a man who had been sauntering leisurely along the pavement with a discontented expression on his swarthy face, caught sight of them. He recognized them with a great start, and sprang forward, exclaiming :]

“Miss Rosse ! Cecil ! Can it be possible ?”

The girl turned hastily and recognized him with a glow of pleasure.

“Mr. Crafton !” she exclaimed.

“Maldred Crafton, at your service ! I’ve just been over to Germany to see you. No one could give me your address. This is pure luck. Thank Heaven, I have found you !” and an exultant flash leaped to the villain’s eyes. “I was always a lucky fellow !”



## CHAPTER XI.

### A FATEFUL ENCOUNTER.

Cecil Rosse had never thoroughly liked the chosen friend of Lord Glenham. Crafton had seemed to her insincere, and she had experienced an instinctive distrust of him, for which she had often blamed herself, saying in her own heart that he must be good, or Lord Glenham would not choose him for his constant companion. That the earl, who seemed to her wise above other men, might have been himself deceived, did not occur to her.

Meeting Crafton now in a country in which she was a stranger, she forgot her former aversion to him, and held out both her hands in delighted greeting, her face lighted up with pleasure. He was a link between her and dear old Zorlitz and the dead pastor—between her and the earl, the hero of her girlish dreams. Crafton's swarthy face was as

beautiful to her in that moment as if it had been the face of an angel.

"I am so glad to see you," she exclaimed. "It is such a surprise—"

"To me as to you, Miss Rosse," responded Crafton, pressing her hand fervently. "Yet I was thinking of you at that moment."

"You remind me of home," said Cecil. "I feel almost as if I were back at Zorlitz."

"You have Gretchen with you, I see. How do you do, Gretchen?" said Crafton, addressing the old German woman politely. "This is a change for you, is it not? Have you friends in London, Miss Rosse, or relatives?"

"I have no relatives in the whole world," replied the girl. "I came here because—you do not know the trouble I have had, Mr. Crafton. My dear uncle is dead!"

"I know it. You did not understand me, I dare say, in the excitement of our meeting, but I am but just returned from Zorlitz."

Cecil uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I have a great deal to say to you, but this is no place for explanations," said Crafton, glancing about him. "We are attracting attention, too. Permit me to accompany you to your lodgings, where we can talk at our leisure."

Cecil assented and signaled an omnibus. Crafton assisted the young lady and her servant to enter it, and followed them. The ride was a silent one,

necessarily, there being other passengers, and Crafton gave a sigh of relief as they alighted in the Bayswater district and continued the journey on foot.

Cecil had just narrated the manner in which she had discovered her present lodgings, when they arrived at Number Four, Queen's Crescent. The housemaid gave them admittance, and Crafton was ushered into Mrs. Thomas' own parlor. Leaving Gretchen with him, Cecil sought her landlady, whom she found in the basement dining-room.

"I met an old friend whom I knew in Germany in the street this morning, Mrs. Thomas," she said, "and I invited him home with me. I have taken the liberty of showing him into your parlor—"

"And quite right, and welcome, too!" exclaimed the landlady. "It was very proper not to take him up to your own parlor, and mine is always at your service."

Cecil expressed her thanks and returned to her visitor, whom she found pacing to and fro, pausing now and then to look out upon the green enclosure in front, and conversing with old Gretchen, who was making many anxious inquiries after the good people of Zorlitz.

As Cecil came in, Crafton advanced to meet her, his face lighting up with a bright glow. It seemed to him that she was more beautiful even than when he had seen her at Zorlitz, the most beautiful girl his eyes had ever rested upon.

She was indeed a rare and radiant vision, in her youth and loveliness, with the golden shimmer in her red-brown hair, and the golden glint in her red-brown eyes. The good pastor had not liked a mourning-garb, deeming it a token of unsubmission to the will of Providence, and in deference to his often expressed wishes, Cecil wore no crape and bombazine. Her dress of black cashmere, adorned with silk embroidery, the work of her own hands, was relieved by white lace ruffles, that set off the slender throat and small white hands to advantage. Her marvelous complexion, soft and creamy in its tinting as the broad petals of the Nile lily, contrasted with the vivid carmine of her sweet and tender mouth. Crafton noticed the unconsciously haughty pose of the lovely head; the grace and perfect breeding that distinguished her, and his love for her was quickened into a consuming passion that for the time dominated his entire being.

"You are not changed during the past three weeks," he observed.

"Yet it seems a lifetime since I saw you at Zorlitz," sighed Cecil, taking the chair he placed for her. "During those three weeks my life has entirely changed. My dear uncle is dead, and I am in a foreign land, for though I am of English birth, still I am a stranger here."

"Were you born in England, Miss Cecil?"

"I do not quite know, but my parents were English—at least my uncle thought so."

"Thought so? Did he not know? Were you not his niece?" demanded Crafton, in surprise.

The girl blushed hotly.

"I did not intend to say what I did, Mr. Crafton," she said. "I thought you knew, and so spoke without thought."

"But will you not explain? You have aroused my curiosity. Were you not the niece of Herr Brocken?"

"No, I was only the child of his love and care. I am not of German blood. I am of English descent," said Cecil; "but my origin is wrapped in mystery. I do not know what name I ought to bear—but do not let us talk of this, Mr. Crafton. I do not expect to ever solve the mystery of my birth, and I prefer not to waste time in speculating upon the subject."

"But your beauty, your—pardon me, Miss Cecil, but my surprise must be my apology for continuing to speak upon this matter. I know you must have come of some noble family. 'Blood will tell.' There is no mystery so deep that it cannot be penetrated. If you would only tell me your story, I might be able to discover your relatives."

"I do not want to discover them," said the girl, proudly. "They abandoned me, and I would not force myself upon their notice. A man—a gentleman in appearance—brought me to the house of the Herr Pastor of Zorlitz fourteen years ago, when I was a child of three years. The good pastor and his wife received me at his hands, a nameless waif,

cared for me, adopted me, loved me, and called me, by the name I bear. I have no right to any name. Mr. Crafton. I belong to no family. My mother may live ; she may pass me in the street to-morrow, yet if she knew and recognized me, she would not dare to own me. Let us speak upon some other subject. Tell me of Zorlitz."

Crafton obeyed. The new pastor was settled in the parsonage with his family. The son of Herr Frolich was married to pretty Fraulein Wilmer. There was no other news from Zorlitz. News was a scarce commodity in that secluded forest-hamlet.

"Why did you go back to Zorlitz so soon?" asked Cecil, wonderingly.

"To see you—and the good pastor. Imagine my consternation on hearing of his death and your departure. No one could tell me where you were, save that you had gone to London. One might as well search for a needle in a haystack as search for a lady in London. I was in despair. I arrived in town only last night. I was intending to start for Scotland this very night. It was fate that led me to walk in Regent street this morning—it was fate that led you there. Our meeting had in it something of the marvelous. I am inclined to be incredulous of my good fortune."

Cecil smiled. Not comprehending as yet the vastness of the overgrown metropolis, the rencontre did not appear to her so marvelous.

There was a question she longed to ask, but dared

not. Gretchen, however, having no maidenly consciousness upon the subject, broached the subject, saying :

“Where is my Lord Glenham? Did he go with you to Zorlitz, Herr Crafton?”

Crafton smiled significantly. He knew that Glenham loved Cecil ardently, passionately, with all his soul. He believed that Cecil returned that love. But as the pair had not been betrothed, had not even come to an understanding with each other, he determined to effect, if possible, an estrangement between them.

“And their estrangement will be my opportunity,” he said to himself. “In her pride, anger, or wounded love, she will consent to become my wife. I shall have everything my own way.”

He looked at Cecil, as he replied carelessly to old Gretchen:

“Lord Glenham did not accompany me to Germany. I went alone.”

“Is his lordship in London?” asked the German woman.

“No, he is in Scotland with a lot of friends shooting. He is having a delightful time, the more delightful because his nearest neighbor is a lady for whom he has a great admiration,” and Crafton smiled.

A swift pang of jealousy traversed Cecil's heart. Her face was paler than usual, and her eyes fixed

themselves upon her visitor in a burning gaze, but still she did not speak.

"Who is the lady?" asked old Gretchen, abruptly, noting the change in her young mistress, and knowing well its cause.

"The lady is a young widow, a beauty, and immensely rich, the granddaughter of Lord St. Leonards, one of the first peers of the realm. Her name is Lady Trevor."

"And what is Lord Glenham to her?" asked Gretchen.

"He is her admirer, her suitor, her lover," responded Crafton, lying with an air so plausible that the woman believed him. "He is her betrothed."

Cecil grew pale as death, but she uttered no exclamation. Her self-control was something wonderful in one so young and unused to society. But that she had received a terrible blow one could not doubt.

"He betrothed?" ejaculated old Gretchen. "He did not say so; he did not act as if he were while he was at Zorlitz."

"No? You think so because you did not know his secret. Englishmen are reticent—too reticent, I think. Glenham loves Lady Trevor. Her beauty gratifies his eyes; her noble birth and high connections flatter his pride. I think," added Crafton, deliberately, "if he loved Venus herself and there were any flaw or blemish in that lady's origin, he would decline the honor of an alliance with her."

The English nobility are sticklers for noble birth in seeking a mate. So you can understand that Glenham is well-suited in Lady Trevor," he added.

Cecil averted her face. She was proud as any titled dame in England, not with a petty and ignoble pride born of vanity, but with that pride that scorns a mean action, and compels one to preserve intact one's self-respect. She could not permit her visitor to see the suffering his words had caused her, but the struggle to hide her agony was something terrible.

"How soon will Lord Glenham marry this Lady Trevor?" asked old Gretchen, to cover her mistress' silence.

"Some time this winter. He has a bad habit of falling in love with every pretty face he sees," lied Crafton, boldly, "and Lady Trevor naturally dislikes that trait of his, so the marriage will take place soon, and she can then watch over him with wifely care. He is a noble fellow, as generous as the sun, but he is fickle and inconstant as the wind. It is not his fault. He was made so, and one cannot belie one's own nature."

"And he is in Scotland with her now?" asked the old German woman.

"In the same neighborhood. They see each other every day. The countess, Glenham's mother, is anxious for her son's marriage with Lady Trevor, and is with her son. Lord St. Leonards is up there, too, and among them all the earl is held pretty close

to his betrothal-vows. I expected to find you at Zorlitz, Miss Rosse, and Glenham desired to be remembered to you. He told me to tell you that he should never forget your kindness to him, and that he should return to Zorlitz next summer, bringing his bride with him !”

“I—I may not be there,” said Cecil, bravely, although her lips quivered. “But please thank him, in my name, for his remembrance of me. And—and convey to him my best wishes for his happiness.”

“I will do so. You look tired, Miss Rosse. Permit me to cut my visit short and to call again to-morrow. I shall remain in town a day or two.”

“I shall be pleased to see you,” said Cecil, simply.

“Thanks. I will come. And now let me bid you good-morning.”

He moved towards the door, hat in hand. Gretchen followed to give him egress. At the outer door, he whispered to the old servant :

“Come outside. I shall wait for you at the corner of the Crescent. I have something of importance to say to you.”

The old woman nodded assent and closed the door after him. Then she returned to the parlor.

Cecil was standing near the centre of the room, every vestige of brightness and color stricken from her lovely face ; her glorious young beauty overshadowed by an anguish too deep for tears.

“My poor lamb !” cried the old woman, in a burst

of pity and grief. "Lord Glenham is a bad, bad man—"

"Hush, Gretchen," said the girl, wearily. "I cannot hear you speak ill of him. He is good and noble."

"He made love to you while he was betrothed to a lady of his own country. I liked him, but I like him no longer."

"Oh, hush, dear Gretchen ; you hurt me cruelly. He liked me as if he had been my brother, that is all. How could one expect a noble lord to marry one like me, a nameless thing rejected by my own kin?"

"He told the Herr Pastor that he loved you," persisted Gretchen. "He said he should come again in a year to claim you. The Herr Pastor told him your history. It was that that made him give you up. If you had been well born, he would have broken off with his English love and married you. Fickle and faithless, you are well rid of him, Miss Cecil. Don't fret. Don't look like that ! Come up stairs. Mrs. Thomas will return, now that Mr. Crafton has gone. She will see you—"

Cecil moved forward as under the sting of a spur. She hurried up-stairs with swift, impetuous tread, and entered her little parlor, commencing to walk to and fro with the rapid grace of a caged leopardess.

The old woman began some invective against Lord Glenham, but her young mistress stopped her by a gesture.

"Do not speak of him again!" said the girl. "I do not blame him; I was not a fit mate for him." It is better that he should marry a lady noble and rich. His mother would not have liked me. It is better as it is, Gretchen—only I know that he did love me, and if he had deemed me worthy to be his wife he would have been true to me. I think, too, that he could not have been betrothed last summer, but I do not doubt that he is now. Nothing can shake my faith in his honor, Gretchen. I hope he will be happy," and the sweet voice broke down in a sob. "Leave me to myself for a little. I shall be all right soon."

She went into her bedroom and closed her door.

The old woman proceeded to her own room, put on her bonnet, and descended to the street. She found Crafton waiting impatiently for her at the corner of the Crescent.

"You wished to see me, sir?" she said, with bitterness. "Well, I am here!"

"So I see," was the cool response. "I wanted to speak to you about your mistress, Gretchen. Lord Glenham had quarreled with his betrothed last summer, and was in a mood to marry some one else in haste. He conceived an infatuation for Miss Rosse, and would have married her but that he suspected a mystery concerning her birth—"

"He knew of the mystery. The Herr Pastor told him all."

"Yes, I know," said Crafton, lying. "And that

revelation quenched his love. He couldn't marry a nameless girl, you understand, and took to flight. Since his return he has become reconciled to Lady Trevor, and their marriage will be hurried forward. He is good and noble, and he is sadly troubled about his little flirtation of last summer. He fears that he won Miss Rosse's heart—"

"He need not fear it," cried the old woman, angrily. "I'll tell her what you say. And you may tell him that Miss Rosse will be quite able to survive his loss. Oh, to think he should turn out like this, and he so handsome, so gentle, so courteous even to the lowest. Why, we thought him perfect."

"No one is that; but he has very few faults, Gretchen, very few. But I did not ask you to meet me here to talk of him. Miss Rosse is friendless, with the exception of me. I would die to serve her. I desire to place my purse in your hands. You need not tell her, you know, and I cannot bear that she should know what privation is."

"You are kind, sir, but we have plenty of money and plenty of work."

"She work! That peerless creature! I cannot bear that she should toil while I have so much. Take my purse, Gretchen—"

"I thank you, sir," responded the old woman, firmly, "but I cannot take one penny from you. But I appreciate your kindness, and am grateful for it. Work will not hurt my little lady. But for work she might brood over her troubles—"

"But if you ever need help of a friend, you will send to me? Promise me, Gretchen."

"I do promise. You are our best friend—hers, I mean," said the old woman. "And if she needs friendship, I will come or send to you."

"And I shall come often to see her. You must have read my secret, Gretchen. I loved Miss Cecil—I love her now with all my soul. If she would but let me shelter her from the world, care for her, and minister to her, I should be the happiest of men. I have an elegant home to offer her. I have an independent fortune. And you should never be separated from her, but should live like a lady for the rest of your days. Do you think I have no chance with her, Gretchen? I am not rich, like the earl; I am not a lord, nor as handsome as he, but I have a warm, true heart that worships her. Do you think I might hope to win her?"

The old woman surveyed him with keen scrutiny. His swarthy face and glowing black eyes showed how deeply he was in earnest. She could not doubt the truth of his professions of love for her young mistress, and in spite of previous aversion to him, her heart warmed toward him.

"After a little, Miss Cecil may be willing to listen to you, sir," she said. "I will use my influence, and I have a great deal, with her. We are two lone women in a strange country. If anything were to happen to me—and I am growing old now—she would be left all alone. She is beautiful, innocent, and so very

young, little more than a child. If I could see her a happy wife, the mistress of a pleasant home, I could be content. Only have patience, sir, and all will be well."

"I will be patient. I can wait. I love her, and the faintest hope of winning her will sustain me through months of suspense. I will not detain you longer, Gretchen. I will call upon Miss Rosse to-morrow. Remember your promise."

He wrung her hand and hurried away, muttering, exultantly :

"So far well. What a streak of luck I've had this morning. First, the meeting with her. That was unexpected to me—a regular fatality ! Then my lies about Glenham. They were clever, for impromptu efforts, I flatter myself. That girl is proud enough. How she held control of herself ! She believed me, of course, and is now crying her eyes out, I don't doubt. I wonder what Glenham would say to my little fiction. The result will confirm my story. Between them all, Lady Trevor, Lady Glenham, and Lord St. Leonards, he'll be forced into an engagement of marriage with the handsome widow, or I am no judge of the strength of will of his opponents. I shall keep my knowledge of Cecil's whereabouts to myself, and win and marry her before he knows that she has left Zorlitz. I believe," and he smiled grimly, "that I am now master of the situation !"

Gretchen returned home, saying to herself :

"How we misjudged Herr Crafton! We took the glitter for refined gold and threw aside the gold as dross. He is noble and good. I shall use all my influence with Miss Cecil to induce her to marry him. And, after a little, I think I can persuade her to accept him. I shall not rest until she is his wife!"



## CHAPTER XII.

### MOTHER AND SON.

It was the morning after Lady Glenham's arrival at Breezy Lodge, a magnificent autumnal morning, with crisp and frosty atmosphere, clear and bracing, and with splendid sunshine flooding the valleys and glorifying the hoary and rugged mountain tops. It was a morning for sportsmen, dogs and guns, and Lord Glenham's guests sallied forth with their Highland guides in quest of feathered game. The earl remained with his lady-mother, who desired a private interview with him.

The two were together in the drawing-room of the Lodge—a long, low, wainscoted room, with seven windows overlooking the steep descent and the wooded valley below, and commanding a majestic prospect of mountains and distant sea. The furniture was old-fashioned and substantial. A fire was burning on the hearth, and Lady Glenham sat before it with a feathered screen in her hand.

She was a noble-looking woman, with a peculiar

majesty of bearing that rendered her exceptionally distinguished even in the queen's drawing-room. She was fair and haughty, with gray hair arranged in puffs above her forehead, with frosty blue eyes and a firm, proud mouth, and she carried herself like an empress. She did not look like a woman given to tenderness. Her leading characteristic was pride, yet with all her soul she loved her son. That he had remained unmarried until now had sorely troubled her. That he had never loved till now had been a grief to her. His fair and splendid manly beauty was the delight of her eyes and heart. She knew him to be noble, manly, brave, and honorable. He had the high-bred Englishman's horror of untruth, and his love for her was chivalrous and reverential. She had deemed him perfect—until now.

Lord Glenham had drawn a seat near her own and had prepared himself for the attack he expected. He had not long to wait.

"You ought to call at Castle Cliff this morning, Gordon," said the countess. "Lord St. Leonards left his card yesterday in person. And Lady Trevor will naturally expect to see you—such good friends as you have always been with her."

"I have been friendly with her, mother," said the earl, "but it was principally because I like the marquis and pitied his loneliness. He is old ; she is his only living descendant. It seems to me that he

would be happier if he would be reconciled to her, and she would delight in ministering to him."

"Lady Trevor is a very handsome woman," observed the countess.

"Very handsome," replied the earl, rather absently. "But I like fair beauties best," and he looked affectionately into the fair face beside him.

Lady Glenham flushed a little. She could not hear unmoved her son's praise.

"Lady Trevor has not always been wise," she remarked. "Her marriage with Sir Albert Trevor was a folly and madness, but she has repented it. She has a great fortune, inherited from her step-mother, through the death of her little step-sister. I had hoped, Gordon, that you would present her to me before this as my daughter ;" and Lady Glenham's voice slightly trembled.

"You love her so well, mother?" asked the earl, gently.

"It would be a suitable alliance," said Lady Glenham, evasively. "Her beauty, rank and wealth render her a match for a duke. Her grandfather is become reconciled to her, I suppose, and she will have another fortune at his death. You will succeed to his title and estates ; how fitting that you should marry his descendant !"

"I don't quite agree with you, mother. I don't love Lady Trevor, therefore I cannot ask her to marry me. I do love one far superior to her in beauty and genius, and who is many years younger

than she. Mother, if you would see Miss Rosse you would love her. Think what it would be to you to have a daughter so youthful, so lovely, so gentle, who would love you as I do. If you would only go with me to Zorlitz—”

“My poor boy, you have been deceived by some wicked adventuress. You said that the girl was English, and the adopted niece of the German pastor. Now who are her English relatives? You said that there was some mystery about her; that the pastor did not know her name or identity; that a man had brought her to his house and asked him to care for her and bring her up, offering to pay for her support some trifling sum. You said that this mysterious guardian stipulated that the girl should be brought up as a servant. The man then disappeared, vanishing as mysteriously as he had come, and never again showed himself at Zorlitz, nor wrote, nor sent a messenger to enquire after his unfortunate charge. There is but one explanation to all this mystery, Gordon. The girl has no right to any name.”

The earl's fair face reddened.

“I suppose you are right, mother,” he said, in a low voice, “in respect to your theory of her origin. The pastor said as much to me. But whatever her origin, Cecil Rosse is a pure and stainless lily, a noble, lovely girl who would be an honor to our house. She is an angel, mother, and I adore her!”

“For the sake of an infatuation that is wonderful at your age, Gordon, you would present to me this

nameless creature as my daughter ? would make her Countess of Glenham ? Think of it ! You would bring to me, the daughter of a duke, this girl as my successor !”

“ If you would only see her—”

“ I will not see her. I would not lower myself so far as to go to Zorlitz to look on her false face. I have seen one such marriage as you contemplate. Lord Harry Ravendale, the only son of the Marquis of St. Leonards, married an adventuress and repented his folly in anguish. I would rather see you dead than the husband of that woman.”

“ Mother !”

“ I speak truth. Marry her, Gordon, and I will never look upon your face again. More—I will give you my curse—”

“ *Mother !*”

The earl sprang to his feet, white and startled.

“ I mean it,” said the countess, sternly, her haughty face rigid as marble and singularly stern. “ If you degrade the name I bear by bestowing it upon her, then I shall curse you !”

Lord Glenham’s face grew stern also, but sorrowful even unto anguish.

“ If I do not marry Cecil Rosse,” he exclaimed, “ then I will go to my grave unwedded. You know that I never loved before. I never had any boyish fancies. I never cared for any woman save you, mother. And now when love comes to me it comes in a resistless torrent, an overwhelming passion,

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that cannot be conquered and which will grow stronger with every day and hour of my life. If it be true that souls are made to mate, then is Cecil Rosse my twin spirit. I cannot marry her, if she would accept me, and brave your curse, mother. But what a frightful thing to say to your son ! I think she loves me. Can you bear the guilt of wrecking her life and mine.

"Far better than I could bear to see her your wife. The girl is unworthy of you, and the conviction of that fact will sustain me even under your reproaches, Gordon. Oh, my boy, how can you wreck my life for the sake of this woman ? I have built all my hopes on you. My son, my son, do not disappoint me so cruelly ! Have pity on your mother's gray hairs !" pleaded the countess, her voice suddenly breaking, her noble features working. "I have made you my idol. Must I be punished like this ?"

She wrung her hands in an agony of grief. Her son leaned against the mantel-piece and looked upon her with an agitation equal to her own.

"Mother, you agonize yourself for nothing," he exclaimed. "I will stake my soul on Cecil's purity and truth—"

"And on that of her parents ? Can you tell me the real name of this creature you would marry ? Oh, my son, my dear boy, have pity on me, if not upon yourself ! Leave this girl, who should have been a servant, to her obscurity. Be worthy of

your name and race. Do not let this infatuation be carried further, I implore you !”

What the earl would have answered cannot be told, for he had but opened his lips to speak when the rumble of wheels was heard upon the drive without.

A minute later the door was flung open, and a servant announced :

“ Lady Trevor and the Marquis of St. Leonards !”



## CHAPTER XIII.

### MYSTERY.

By the time Lady Trevor and Lord St. Leonards entered the drawing-room, Lady Glenham and the earl had recovered their composure. There is nothing a well-bred Englishman values more highly than the power of self-control. And so, when Lady Trevor advanced into the room, preceding the marquis by a few paces, the countess arose to receive her, paler than usual, it is true, and looking a little worn and weary, but calm and smiling, showing but a single emotion, that of pleased welcome.

Lord Glenham found it more difficult to recover himself. He had been stirred to the very deepest depths of his nature. His mother's words, threatening him with her curse if he should persist in his purpose of marrying Cecil Rosse, still rang in his ears. There was a little trace of agitation in his manner, in spite of his stern effort at self-repression, as he, too, advanced and greeted his visitors.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Edith," said the countess, embracing Lady Trevor. "Gordon was intending to ride over to Castle Cliff this morning to return Lord St. Leonards' visit. I am glad to see you, my dear old friend," and she held out her hand to the marquis. "It does me good to see you two together."

Lord St. Leonards bowed his grand and haughty head, but his countenance did not express any corresponding pleasure. He was endeavoring to reconcile himself to his granddaughter, but the deep displeasure of years was not to be lightly set aside. He saw all her faults. There was no tender glamour of affection to soften them in his sight. He could not forget that she had married against his will, and that of her father, a man whom he had despised. He could not forget his lingering suspicions of foul play on her part towards her little orphaned step-sister fourteen years before. He doubted her in spite of his efforts to believe in her. When he most tried to like her, then the demon of suspicion whispered to him the most terrible accusations against her. He was unrestful and dissatisfied, yet he seriously blamed himself, and was determined to conquer his distrust.

"If she is the child of that adventuress, she is also the child of my own son," he said to himself more than once. "She cannot be so bad as I have thought. She seems no worse than other women of the world. She loves Lord Glenham, and will make

him a good wife, no doubt. If all I sometimes think of her be true, then she would be an unfit mate for him ; but it can hardly be true—I must have wronged her—and I will do well, for his sake as well as hers, to endeavor to bring about the marriage.”

It was with thoughts like these he had come to Breezy Lodge upon this morning.

He watched the meeting between the earl and Lady Trevor with keen interest.

The baronet's widow had attired herself with more than usual care. She wore a carriage dress of dark blue velvet and blue silk. Her hat of dark blue velvet also was lavishly adorned with canary-colored ostrich plumes, and her long gloves were of canary color. She appeared at her best ; her brunette complexion was gently flushed with carmine ; her black eyes, usually hard and glittering, were soft and bright ; and her smiles were certainly bewitching—as they ought to have been ; she had practised them a whole hour that morning before her mirror. She blushed vividly as she shook hands with Lord Glenham, and dropped her eyelids, and exhibited a consciousness and timidity that betrayed her secret to the eyes of the countess.

But the earl showed only the quiet pleasure of a friend. He had known her many years. The two families were distantly related, and Lord Glenham was next in the line of succession to the marquis, so the pair had been brought together in a sort of brotherly and sisterly intimacy. He liked Lady

Trevor ; he had endeavored to reconcile the marquis to her, but he had never dreamed of making her his wife.

The younger couple sat down near together. The elder pair drew near the hearth and conversed in low tones, unheard by the others.

"You came when we were in the midst of a scene, Marquis," said Lady Glenham, wearily. "I only arrived last night, and I deemed it best to speak to my son this morning. His infatuation is complete."

"I am distressed to hear it."

"I have always known that, with his ardent and passionate nature, love would be with him the one great event of his life," sighed Lady Glenham. "He had never any boyish fancies. And now, as I had foreseen, he loves with all his soul. He fairly worships that girl, Marquis ; he will never love another woman as he loves her. Yet I could bear to disappoint these dearest wishes of his, since the disappointment would be for his good."

"My son's life was wretched for many years because he married an adventuress with whom he was infatuated. He found her worthless and was tired of her in a month's time, yet he had to bear the burden of his fault until death relieved him of her claims. If Glenham were to marry this foreign woman he would repent it in bitterness of anguish. Be firm, Countess, in your opposition to the match."

"I cannot be otherwise than firm. Could I receive that adventuress as my daughter ? Shall she rule

in my stead? Shall she bear the name I have honored?" asked the countess, her proud and haughty face hardening in every feature. "No, no. A thousand times no!"

"There is no doubt that the woman is an adventuress, I suppose?"

"None whatever. She is a low-born creature, and was intended by her guardian to be a servant. She has a pretty face, that is all. It's the old story of Lord Harry Ravendale's infatuation over again. And Gordon says that if he does not marry her, he will never marry at all."

"That is the utterance of passion. It is something if he intimates a doubt of his marrying her."

"I threatened to curse him if he made her his wife. It's a frightful thing for a mother to say, is it not? But I have been so proud of him; I have made him my idol, and now if he disappoint me in my hopes and wishes, I will never look upon his face again. They are a fine pair, Marquis," she added, glancing at the young couple.

Lady Trevor's brunette beauty contrasted admirably with the blond face of the earl. Her raven locks appeared blacker by contrast with his close-curling rings of fair hair. He looked noble, grand, and distinguished; she handsome, coquettish, and bewitching. Even the marquis smiled approvingly upon them.

"If only they would like each other," said the countess. "I have talked to Gordon, now I pray

you to counsel him also. Tell him of your son. Tell him of my sorrow and my gray hairs. Plead for me as I cannot plead for myself. He may heed you, since he knows you can have no prejudice in the matter, and as he is the heir to your title you have the right to advise and warn him."

The marquis bowed a grave assent, and at the first pause of consequence in the conversation of the younger couple, exclaimed:

"I have heard that you have built new kennels for your dogs, Glenham, upon some vastly improved model. As I think of improving the kennels at St. Leonards I would like to see yours, if you will show me them."

"With pleasure," responded Lord Glenham, arising with a sensation of relief, and longing for the out-door air after his long suppressed excitement. "I designed the kennels myself, and shall like to have your opinion upon them."

The gentlemen took up their hats and withdrew.

Lady Glenham was seated in a low chair before the fire. Before she could change her position Lady Trevor came forward with a rustling, swinging motion and took a chair beside her.

"Shall we talk secrets, Countess?" asked the widow, playfully. "Grandpapa has told of your great trouble," and now her tone was serious. "I am so sorry—more sorry than I can express," and she drew a long sigh.

"You refer to Gordon's infatuation," responded

the haughty old countess, warming to her visitor. "I cannot bear it, my dear. He must hear to reason. He cannot, he must not marry that adventuress. I would rather die than see him the husband of that creature."

Lady Trevor did not answer, but betrayed an agitation she tried in vain to conceal.

"I have recently formed new plans, new hopes for him," continued the countess. "Of course, a mother cannot choose a wife for her son, yet if he would be guided by me he would bring me a daughter-in-law I could respect and like," she could not say love; "and not one unworthy the name he would give her."

Lady Trevor bowed, not seeming to take the allusion as personal.

"My dear," said Lady Glenham, turning to her abruptly, "help me to save my son from this wretched folly he contemplates. Invite his confidence. Advise him. You must have influence with him. Lord St. Leonards will urge him to abandon his infatuation, and you, if you will, can show him what his friends think of it. Will you aid me?"

"I will. Whatever I can do or say to prevent his marriage with this foreign woman I will do."

"He has been begging me to go to Germany with him to see the girl. If I were to do so I might be able to expose her real character to him, but I cannot bear even to look on her false, deceitful face."

"You are sure that she is bad, Countess—that she is unworthy of your son?"

"Certainly. If you knew her history I know that your opinion would coincide with mine. I know that I should fathom her real character and be able to unmask her scheming if I could only persuade myself to go to Zorlitz—"

Lady Trevor recoiled as if galvanized; her eyes starting, her face white, horrified, incredulous.

The countess regarded her in amaze.

"You are ill, Edith—"

"No, no," said the widow, speaking by a painful effort, in a strained and husky voice. "It was the—the heat—a spark of fire on my hand—that was all."

She moved her chair back a little, averting her face from the red glow of the flames so that it remained in shadow.

There was a little pause. The countess' mind had been diverted momentarily from the main current of her thoughts. The widow said, huskily:

"You said the girl lived at Zurich?"

"Not at Zurich, but a little village in the Black Forest called Zorlitz. It is all out of the world, a hamlet where the peasants carve toys and raise and train singing-birds. It is out of the way of tourists. The villagers never leave their hamlet, and the visits of the bird and toy agents once or twice a year are the great events of their lives."

"How happened Lord Glenham to go there?" asked Lady Trevor, still in that strained voice, in

which a sharper ear than that of Lady Glenham might have detected a rising terror.

"He set out early in the summer, with Maldred Crafton, his inseparable friend, to explore a portion of the Black Forest. They desired to find some spot where the British tourists had not yet penetrated. They wished to hunt, to find adventures, to study the people. Some fatality took them to this secluded little hamlet of Zorlitz."

"It was indeed a fatality," muttered Lady Trevor, inaudibly. "Oh, Heaven, what does it all mean? What does it mean?"

She trembled with excitement, yet she was forced to appear calm.

"What did you say, my dear? I did not quite catch your words."

"I asked the name of the girl he loves."

"Her name is Cecil Rosse. At least they call her so. Her real name no one knows."

Again Lady Trevor started, and her eyes were wild and her lips bloodless. She put one shaking hand to her face.

"Is she English?" she asked in a whisper, speaking quickly to prevent the utterance of Lady Glenham's surprise at her emotion.

"She is supposed to be of English birth, but who knows what she is? There is a mystery about her, a shameful mystery. I will tell you all, that you may understand why I am so bitterly opposed to my son's marriage with her. She has no parents—she

never had any—no name, no friends, no position, no right even to live.”

Lady Trevor's hands clenched themselves tightly together under the drooping ends of her white lace scarf.

“How did she happen to be at Zorlitz?” she asked, hoarsely. “How old is she?”

“Her age is about seventeen, Gordon says, but youth is no criterion of innocence, Edith. The girl may be a perfect adventuress even at seventeen—she is! Some years ago, I can't tell how many, and it don't matter, for the girl was but little more than a baby, a man appeared at the Zorlitz parsonage one dark night with this child in his arms—”

“At the parsonage,” Lady Trevor repeated to herself, under her breath.

“He told the pastor that the child had no right to her existence, and begged the good man to bring her up in that secluded hamlet. The pastor's wife accepted the charge, and the man disappeared as singularly as he had come. Is it not a mysterious story? The pastor's wife named the girl after a former pupil. There you have the history of Cecil Rosse in brief. And my son has fallen in love with this girl, and would make her his wife. Do you wonder that I cannot bear it?”

“I wonder at the earl. How can he have fallen in love with this girl, who was left at the pastor's house, undoubtedly, only because that house had a light in it and was near the outskirts of the village?”

demanded Lady Trevor, with flashing eyes and flushing face. "How could Lord Glenham, cultivated, accomplished, thoroughly well-bred and well educated, how could he have fallen in love with this servant, brought up as a peasant?"

The countess looked bewildered.

"My dear Edith, you mistake," she exclaimed. "I suppose the marquis has been telling you the story, and has got it all wrong. The girl is not a servant—"

"Not a servant?" cried the widow, her voice ringing out sharply.

"Nothing of the kind. I supposed her a kind of peasant, and Gordon explained to me that the pastor and his wife had adopted her as their niece, thanks to her baby beauty."

"But she must be ignorant?"

"Not so. The pastor had been a tutor in a noble family for many years, and his wife had been a governess in the same family. His patron procured him the pastorate of the little church at Zorlitz, and presented him a very good library, as a recompense for his years of faithful service. The couple loved children and had none of their own. So they adopted this girl and brought her up as a lady. They taught her English, French and German, giving her a thorough education. The pastor's wife taught her music, drawing, painting, and embroidery. No daughter of our own nobility has had better opportunities than this nameless creature has had. The girl is a thorough lady in seem-

ing. How could you think that my son would fall in love with an ignorant servant?"

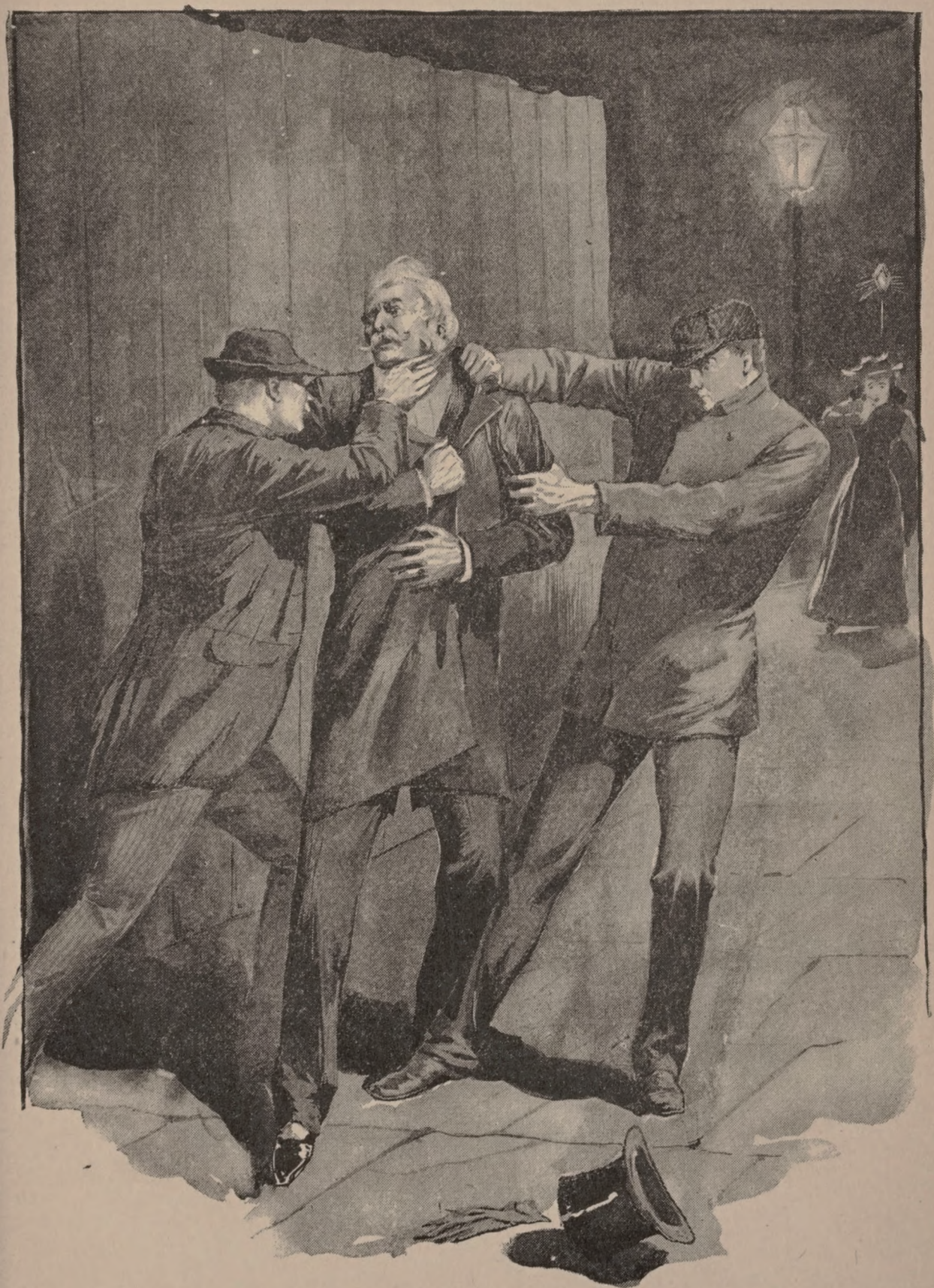
"I beg your pardon, Countess. I thought she was that, and that her face was her only charm. You said she is beautiful?"

"Gordon says so. I suppose she has a fine complexion and pretty ways. But having been educated as a lady she must long for a different life from that at Zorlitz. With her bad blood, she must be scheming. She has entrapped my son, and he declares that he will marry her or die unwedded. If I refuse to visit Zorlitz, he intends to go back there himself next month, to see her and the pastor."

"He will go back?" said Lady Trevor, breathlessly.

"It seems that he asked the pastor's permission to marry the girl, but did not speak to the creature herself upon the subject of marriage. He deems it his duty to tell this Herr Brocken of my opposition and ask his advice. I am very cruelly placed, Edith. As surely as Gordon goes back, the girl will snare him into a marriage. I am nearly wild with my troubles!"

The countess was too absorbed in her anxieties to notice her companion. Lady Trevor sat in shadow, her face white as death, her eyes cold and glittering, her mouth set in a hard and cruel expression. She looked wicked and terrible, as one struggling with an awful terror, and capable of committing almost any crime in her agony of des-



THE GENTLEMAN WAS SEIZED BY TWO RUFFIANS.—See Page 171.



peration. She drew her breath hard, and her hands were locked together in a fierce grip that strained her gloves at every seam.

"Lord Glenham will return to Zorlitz next month," she said, huskily. "A great deal may happen in a month!" and her tone was terribly significant.

"Gordon will not change, and in a place like Zorlitz she cannot find another lover. I see no prospect of comfort, Edith. I have hope that your influence and that of the marquis, added to mine, may effect some good—ah, here they come, my dear."

As the door opened and the gentlemen entered, both ladies regarded them anxiously, under cover of smiling unconcern. Lady Trevor had not yet recovered her usual looks, but she had drawn her little black-dotted veil over her face, and slight as was the screen, it helped to conceal the change in her.

The old lord looked worn and tired. That he had failed in his task, one look at his gloomy eyes, lurking sombrely beneath his cavernous white brows, could not fail to discover.

The earl looked troubled, but it was easy to see that his love for Cecil Rosse, and his faith in her, had not been in the slightest degree affected by the pleadings and expostulations of his friend. His fair and noble face was slightly clouded, but his manner was pleasant as ever.

"I think, grandfather, that we are making a long

visit," said Lady Trevor, arising. "Our guests will think us lost."

"Your guests, Edith, not mine," corrected the marquis, moodily. "I am quite ready."

"You will at least remain long enough for a cup of tea, will you not?" asked the countess, ringing the bell. "Excuse my seeming inhospitality. The air is crisp and chilly this morning, and a cup of hot drink will do you good."

Lady Trevor expressed assent, and resumed her seat. The countess ordered refreshments, and a tray was brought in, laden with wine and biscuits, and a tiny silver tea-kettle and caddy.

Lady Glenham made the tea herself, and a little more cheerful conversation attended its consumption. Lady Trevor invited the countess and the earl, with the lady-guests of the former and the gentlemen-guests of the latter, to dine at Castle Cliff upon the following day, and the invitation was accepted.

"I will remain to the dinner," said the marquis. "I had intended to leave for Inverness in the morning, but I will defer my journey a day longer. I wish to run up to London for a few days, and shall be happy to perform any commissions for you, Glenham."

"Thank you, but I have none. Crafton is in town, and I expect him back in a day or two," said the earl. "If you should happen to see him, you might

mention to him that he is losing the very best of the shooting."

Lady Trevor again arose to take her leave. Her adieux were gracefully made, and she pressed the hand of the countess, and kissed her affectionately at the door of the drawing-room, then taking the arm of the earl, who escorted her to the waiting carriage.

When the vehicle was making its laborious descent of the mountain Lady Trevor broke the silence, saying :

"Well, grandfather, how did you succeed?"

"I failed," was the gruff response. "Glenham is like Harry. He loves the girl and is determined to marry her, or never marry any one. It's a serious thing with him, more serious than I thought. I can't reason him out of his madness. He is going to Zorlitz next month, and you take my word for it, he'll come back with a wife."

Lady Trevor leaned heavily against the carriage window, her face pressed to the glass.

"He shall never find the girl—never!" she said to herself in her heart fiercely. "If he were to marry her I should be ruined. What horrible fatality has entangled the earl in my affairs? I am in deadly peril. I must consult Pulford at once, and if another crime is necessary for my safety," and her visage again grew terrible, "he shall help me commit it. The girl must be got rid of—but how?"



## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN ADVENTURE.

Old Gretchen kept her word to Maldred Crafton, and lost no time in sounding his praises in the ears of her young mistress. The old German woman, in the delight of beholding a friendly, well-known face in a strange land, and in the glow of pleasure produced by his desire to marry Miss Rosse, forgot her former aversion to him, imagined that she had wronged him in her first estimate of his moral qualities, and was eagerly desirous of seeing Cecil his wife, the mistress of his house, and firmly established in a pleasant and comfortable home, where no harm could ever come to her.

“If I should die,” she thought, hurrying up the stair of their lodgings, after her confidential interview with Crafton at the corner of the Crescent, “Miss Cecil would have no one to care for her, or guard her. Her beauty would be her bane. Perhaps, as Lord Glenham loves another woman and is to be married, she may be proud enough to show him

that she does not care for him, and may be willing to marry Mr. Crafton. She loves me, and may pay heed to my persuasions. Poor lamb! I suppose just now she is crying terribly, and even old Gretchen could not comfort her."

She opened the door of the little parlor softly and entered silently. To her surprise, Cecil was sitting by one of the windows, busy at her work. The girl was very pale, and there was an infinite sorrow expressed in the lovely eyes and about the tender mouth, but withal she was calm and composed. She even smiled—a very faint and wintry sort of smile it was, it must be confessed—when she beheld the broad face of her old servant.

"You here, Miss Cecil?" exclaimed Gretchen.

"Yes; where have you been?" asked the young mistress, carelessly, to put a stop to her inquiries.

"To the street corner," answered Gretchen, boldly. "And I saw Mr. Crafton there. We never did him justice, Miss Cecil. He is good and kind, and he offered to do anything for you. He says if you need a friend you can call upon him as if he were your brother."

"He *is* kind, but I shall not need his friendship. Did he say anything more about—about Lord Glenham?"

"He mentioned that when his lordship went to Zorlitz last summer he was free to marry whom he would," acknowledged old Gretchen; "so I suppose that his lordship was not a bad man in making love

to you and asking the Herr Pastor for leave to marry you."

"The earl was free last summer ! I knew he could not have been false, a traitor to another and to me ! I knew it !" And the girl's face grew radiant as the morning, and her eyes shone like suns. "I did not doubt his goodness, Gretchen. I knew that he could not have been betrothed to any other when he made love to me !"

"No, he was not betrothed at that time," said Gretchen, innocently repeating Crafton's lie. "He had been betrothed, but had quarreled with the lady. Then he came to Zorlitz and fell in love with you."

"That may be, and he still be honorable."

"He is terribly proud, like all the English nobility, and when he told the Herr Pastor of his love, and heard that you were a sort of foundling—forgive me, Miss Cecil—he returned to England and told his mother. She was very angry. Then the lady he had been betrothed to made up the quarrel, and his old love for her came back, and they renewed their vows, and he will marry her in the course of a few weeks. He has forgotten his summer at Zorlitz."

"There you are mistaken, Gretchen," said Cecil, with a sudden passionate quiver of the young mouth. "He has not forgotten Zorlitz, nor me. I will stake my life on his faith and nobleness."

"What ! You don't believe in his betrothal and approaching marriage ?"

"Yes, I do. But that does not affect the question. He was not bound to me. My uncle did not deem the marriage suitable, nor do I. He has done well to select a wife of his own rank. I could never have borne to become his wife and made him the object of people's sneers or pity. I know my history, Gretchen, and it is not proper that I should marry."

"Then you did not love Lord Glenham?"

The golden glint shone out of the red-brown eyes like a glow of sunshine. The exquisite face was illuminated by a radiance that fairly dazzled the old servant.

"Love him!" cried Cecil, with strange pathos that contrasted with the ineffable brightness of her countenance. "Love him! Yes, I do, with all my heart and soul. I shall love him till I die, and I shall pray for him morning and evening, Gretchen, for his welfare and happiness, but I can never see him again."

"Perhaps you'll pray for his betrothed, too?"

The brightness fled from the beautiful features.

"No, I cannot pray for her," cried the girl, with a pang of jealousy traversing her passionate young soul—"not yet. But I want him to be happy, and I don't believe he will be since he must think of me and our parting, and know that he has won my heart and left me to suffer. Knowing what I am, he must pity me!"

"If you don't want him to think you pining away for love of him, why don't you marry some one else?"

asked old Gretchen, artfully. "If you were to marry, he couldn't be worried about you."

"I shall never marry. Who would want me—a foundling!"

"Some one loves your beautiful face, Miss Cecil, and worships the very ground you walk on. He has no proud relations to influence him. I mean Mr. Crafton."

"He! You must be mistaken. He does not love me."

"He does. Can't I read looks? He does love you, Miss Cecil, and I wish you were safely married to him. Why spoil your sweet eyes over such toil? Why remain penned in the house hard at work through all the bright days? Why make of yourself an old woman while you are so young? He would take you to travel, would give you horses and a carriage, a bright home, and servants to wait upon you. Dear Miss Cecil, I wish you would marry him!"

"I thought you did not like him, Gretchen."

"I may have said so, but that was nonsense. I do like him. It would be a happy day for me that would see you his wife."

"It cannot be. He does not know my history; if he did he would not wish to make me his wife. Don't speak, Gretchen. It cannot be. You and I will live together always, with no one to come between us. It was for your sake I conquered my grief, but now I am determined to be brave, to bear my sorrow like a woman, not to give way to

tears and complaints. Help me to be brave, Gretchen. Don't speak of Lord Glenham again until I can better bear to hear his name. I intend to apply myself to work hereafter. Work is said to be a remedy for sore hearts."

"Not work with the needle, Miss Cecil. That gives one time for brooding over trouble."

"One does not find much time when one is counting stitches. I wish I could know more of this Lady Trevor," said Cecil, forgetting her resolves for the moment in another swift pang of jealousy. "I wonder if I shall ever see her?"

She took up her work resolutely and began to count her stitches. Gretchen, thinking that she had said enough for the present, sat down to her task of knitting. She had discovered that she could sell fine knitted work, and was determined to earn something in that manner.

The name of Lord Glenham was not mentioned by either mistress or servant during that day, nor during the week that followed. Cecil put her resolves into practice, working early and late upon her embroidery. She grew thinner and paler, and her eyes seemed larger, and there were often bistre circles beneath them that betokened want of sleep. Old Gretchen suspected her of crying at night in the darkness and solitude of her bedroom. More than once the faithful old servant had arisen from her bed and crouched by the connecting door between the two bedrooms and listened to the

muffled sobs and whispered prayers of the young girl, struggling so bravely with her sorrow ; but although her own heart swelled, and her own tears flowed, she never intruded upon that sacred grief.

Maldred Crafton called every day for nearly a week, then believing that his absence would assist his cause even more than his presence in the present state of affairs, he made a parting visit, and departed for the Highlands of Scotland, his particular destination being Breezy Lodge.

A day or two after his departure, Cecil sat down to her work as usual after supper. The evening had closed in early, and although it was not rainy, it was very dark and gloomy.

"I have only one bud more to work and the cloak will be finished," said Cecil. "It will be off my hands in fifteen minutes, Gretchen, and we will take it home early in the morning. What is that ? The postman's knock ? There can be no letter for me !"

But there was a letter for her. The house-maid came up with a missive, which proved to be from Madame Lange, Cecil's employer. It stated that the lady who had ordered the infant's cloak was about to leave town and required it at once. Madame Lange desired Cecil to bring the garment that very evening if it could be finished, and if not to come in person to report progress.

"I must go," said Cecil, resuming her needle. "And you must go with me, Gretchen, of course.

How fortunate that the cloak is so near completion !”

A few minutes' work sufficed to finish it. Gretchen hastened to enfold it in towels and wrap it in paper, and Cecil put on her hat and cloak.

Both were soon ready, and they set out immediately by omnibus for Regent street.

Cecil delivered the cloak, which was greatly admired by Madam Lange, and received her pay and with it a new commission. Then, parcel in hand, she sought the street with Gretchen.

They walked on in the darkness a little distance. The shops were all closed, and the street was filled with gloom except in the neighborhood of the gas-lamps. Vehicles rattled by, but no omnibus was to be seen for the moment. They halted at the next corner.

“There comes an omnibus,” said Gretchen.

She had scarcely spoken the words when a man came running out of the dark street behind them, pursued by two ruffians. He was overtaken, dragged back and hurled to the ground.

Cecil, all unused to scenes of violence, stood for one moment appalled. Then, comprehending that robbery and perhaps murder was in progress, forgetting herself, she uttered a wild shriek and flew toward the struggling group.



## CHAPTER XV.

### RESCUER AND RESCUED.

Cecil's impetuous approach—her wild shriek sharply cutting the night air, and even more loudly echoed by the terrified Gretchen—was the signal for the flight of the would-be robbers.

They paused for a single instant, as if uncertain whether to attack Cecil and her follower, and then hearing a policeman's rattle in Regent street, and the sound of hurrying feet, they gave utterance to a wild curse, and took to their heels, vanishing in the direction whence they had come.

Cecil flew to the side of their intended victim, all pity and horror. He was making an effort to rise. She assisted him with all her slender strength, and he arose unsteadily to his feet, leaning heavily upon her.

"Are you faint, sir?" she asked. "What shall I do?"

The gentleman put his hand to his throat, which

suffered from the strangling grip of his assailants. For the moment he could not speak.

Before he could command his voice a policeman appeared upon the scene, demanding roughly the cause of the "row."

"I shall take you all into custody," he exclaimed, preparing to flash the light of his bull's-eye lantern upon the group, "a-kicking up such a scrimmage as this 'ere in the public 'ighway—"

"Stop!" said the gentleman, haughtily, his voice so stern and authoritative as to awe the "custodian of the law." "If you had been on duty, where you ought to have been, this thing would not have happened. I owe my life to this young lady—and not to you!"

The light of the bull's-eye flashed upon the little group.

In the glare Cecil beheld the gentleman to whose assistance she had so timely come.

He was tall and commanding, with heavy white eyebrows and white mustache, and with the air of an old French military officer. His frosty blue eyes were flashing like drawn swords; his face bristled with indignation at the attempt upon his life and purse, and the policeman quailed before him as if he, the officer, had been the assailant.

"A pretty state of affairs," growled the gentleman, "when a man cannot walk in London streets after nightfall without fear of losing his life. Pretty

guardians, these," and he sneered at the policeman, "of life and property!"

"If you please, sir," said the officer, "these 'ere robberies ain't at all frequent. Now and then they 'appens, and the garroters get penal servitude, and the cat besides. A personal assault is al'ays punished with the cat."

"Small comfort to the garroted person. There's my card, fellow, and now be off."

The policeman took the card, and read aloud:

"The Markiss of St. Leonards. Beg parding, my lud, for my rudeness." and he bowed, servilely. "I wish I could find the fellows as attempted to rob your ludship. If you will describe 'em, my lud, I'll have London scoured for them—"

"I can't describe them," said Lord St. Leonards, impatiently. "I was coming along this street—it's dark, you see—and I heard two men following me. I slackened my pace to let them pass, and they sprang upon me like a pair of tigers. I struggled with them and made my escape. They overtook me, clutched me by the throat, and threw me down. But for the heroism of this young lady, who came running toward me and calling for help, I shudder to think what might have resulted."

The policeman hastened to pick up Lord St. Leonards' hat, which he restored. The marquis held it in his hand while he fixed his regards upon Cecil, who stood, pale and trembling, beside him.

He started at sight of her splendid young beauty,

her rare, exquisite loveliness, the glory of her starry eyes, her air of perfect high breeding. He thought in his heart that he had never looked upon so radiant a vision, and the admiration he felt found expression in his prolonged and wrapt gaze.

Presently, recollecting himself, the marquis motioned the policeman to move on. Then he himself walked towards the nearest gas lamp in company with Cecil and old Gretchen.

"May I not know to whom I am indebted for such timely rescue?" he asked, in a tone so respectful and deferential that even old Gretchen, who was inclined to be suspicious, was satisfied that he was the grand nobleman he looked, and quite incapable of injuring her darling.

"My name," replied Cecil, with a girlish dignity that well became her, "is Miss Rosse. I am very glad to have been of service to you, sir."

Lord St. Leonards heard the name without experiencing the slightest suspicion of the identity of its owner. The name of Ross is too common to excite attention or comment, and it never occurred to him that this young lady might spell her name differently. The Cecil Rosse of Lord Glenham's love he supposed to be at Zorlitz in the house of the pastor. The suspicion that this radiant vision, this high-bred girl with the lovely face and pure, sweet eyes might be the lady of Glenham's love, was a wild flight of the imagination of which he was simply incapable.

If only some instinct might have warned him of the truth ! If only he could have guessed the identity of his young rescuer, how many days of bitterness and nights of anguish might have been averted !

"I am very grateful to you, Miss Rosse," he said, warmly. "I do not doubt but that I owe my life to you, for those desperate ruffians had determined to silence me. Will you permit me to escort you to your home ?"

"I thank you, my lord, but I am well attended," replied Cecil, courteously. "And there comes our omnibus. I must wish you good-evening, with the hope that no serious consequences will follow the attack of your assailants."

Lord St. Leonards felt a strange, keen, vivid interest in Cecil, and experienced a singular reluctance to lose sight of her. Somehow, the gaze of those red-brown eyes thrilled his soul with a pleasure that was half pain.

"The hour is late," he said, "too late for a young girl like you to be out even with a woman servant. I beg you to allow me to attend you to your home, Miss Rosse. I am old enough to be your grandfather," and he smiled. "You will not refuse me—"

Cecil had signaled the omnibus.

"I fear I must, my lord," she replied, in her clear, sweet tones. "I do not require further attendance. Again—good-night !"

She bowed, and, closely followed by Gretchen,

climbed into the vehicle, which rolled away, vanishing into the gloom.

The old marquis watched it out of sight, and stood for a long time afterward staring in the direction in which it had disappeared. There was a strange wistfulness in the expression of his stern and haughty face, a singular warmth in his usually frosty-blue eyes, a peculiar sadness and longing expressed in his closely shut mouth.

"The most beautiful girl I ever saw in my life!" he thought. "Her eyes looked straight into my soul. My heart warmed and thrilled under her glances as it has not warmed for many years. By heaven, if she were but poor, and an orphan, I'd give all I have to dispose of to adopt her legally as my daughter! But I suppose that she is the petted darling of some noble house. That air of exquisite high breeding, and that patrician beauty, indicate gentle blood. And she had a servant with her. It is odd they had no carriage, that they traveled by omnibus. I wish I had thought sooner to hail a cab and follow them. I wish I had asked her address. What a dolt I have been. I shall never see her again—never! How could I have let her go without one clew to her home and circumstances?"

He shook himself impatiently, and moved on into Piccadilly, proceeding toward his own house in Park Lane, with a deep sense of annoyance and discontent at his own oversight in allowing Cecil to thus pass beyond his knowledge.

The girl returned with her old servant to Queen's Crescent, Bayswater, in silence. She made no allusion to the evening's adventure until they were again in her little sitting-room. There was a low fire in the grate, and Gretchen augmented it by piling on more fuel. Cecil removed her wraps and sat down before the hearth with her feet on the fender, while the old servant placed the little tea-kettle on the hob.

"We'll have a cup of tea, liebchen," she said, producing a loaf of bread from a tiny corner cupboard, "and a slice of toast. You've been quite overcome with to-night's adventure. I can see it, even if you don't say anything."

"Gretchen," said Cecil, softly, her eyes glowing, her manner absent and dreamy, "did you ever see a nobler, grander face than that of this English lord, the Marquis of St. Leonards?"

"Never—never," responded Gretchen, cutting a slice from the loaf and thrusting a fork into it. "He is a great man, this marquis!"

"Yes," said Cecil, sighing, "but his face, his eyes, they haunt me, Gretchen. I almost wish I had allowed him to come home with me. Something in his gaze and his tones went to my heart. I suppose, if he knew the truth that I am a foundling, and have no right to the name of Rosse, he would despise me. These English nobles are so proud!"

"It is best that the marquis should know no more about you than he knows now," said Gretchen toast-

ing her bread and burning her face at the same time. "No one ought to blame you for the faults of your parents, Miss Cecil, but they do and they always will. The only thing for you to do is to hide your history—"

"Or avoid acquaintances," interrupted Cecil, proudly. "I shall do that in any case, Gretchen. I am not the equal of these people, and I cannot feel myself to be inferior to any one, however well-born that one may be."

"You're terribly proud, liebchen. But it is well you did not allow the marquis to come home with you. You rendered him a service ; he thanked you. There the thing should naturally end. Why should he come home with you ? He cannot be your friend. You do not need a patron."

"You are right, Gretchen," said Cecil, more cheerfully. "The bread is toasted and the tea is made. How cosy it is here. After all, we have a great deal to be thankful for."

The old servant wheeled a small table beside her young mistress, and the little supper was served and eaten with a relish.

Afterwards, when Gretchen sipped her own tea, Cecil produced her drawing materials and set to work upon a new design, to be copied in raised embroidery upon a lady's opera cloak. This design was to be far more elaborate than the work just finished, and was to be paid for at the most liberal rates.

"It is for a very wealthy lady of fashion," Madame Lange had explained, "one who does not care for the price, but who is extremely difficult to suit. If one stitch is set wrongly, she will reject the garment. She leaves the design to me, only saying that it must be very ornate. Having proved you an artist in design, I place the cloak in your hands, and wish only to see it when finished. You can take your own time, as the lady will spend the present month in the Highlands of Scotland and will not require it until October."

The task was a labor of love to Cecil, who delighted in exquisite colorings.

"I have the idea, Gretchen," she exclaimed. "The lady is brunette and the cloak is of rose-colored cashmere. I will embroider it with convolvuli in thread of silver, with graceful vines and leaves. I'll show you on paper."

With a few rapid strokes of her pencil, she produced the effect desired. Gretchen expressed her admiration and the girl set to work to perfect her idea.

Half the next day was spent in drawing, and then the more toilsome task of embroidery began.

For a week Cecil worked assiduously, early and late, and the garment, under her hands, grew into a thing of marvelous beauty.

She was sitting by her window at work late one afternoon. The twilight was closing in. The shadows were gathering in the corners of the room,

and her eyes were strained by close application. A sudden sense of smarting in them made her drop her needle, and she leaned back wearily in her chair and looked out into the street.

Groups of people were hurrying by. At the opposite house the lights were burning brightly, and through the unshuttered windows Cecil could see young girls no older than herself sitting at pianos, or about the family table, or watching from the windows the return of some loved one. Gretchen had gone out, and a terrible sense of loneliness came over Cecil. She clasped her hands tightly together, and her tender young face grew wan and wistful.

"I wonder if I shall never have a real home again," she thought. "I suppose not. I had no right to existence—those were the words my unknown guardian used—and so I have no right to its joys and comforts. I shall never marry, never have any one in all the world but Gretchen. It is hard," she thought, rebelliously, her red-brown eyes glooming stormily—"it is too hard! I am not to blame for living. I have done no wrong. Why should I not have some pleasures like those girls opposite? Why should I be punished for the sins of those who came before me?"

The young soul was thus struggling with the great problem of existence when the door opened, and Gretchen came in with parcels.

"In the dark, Miss Cecil?" she asked. "And the fire almost out? This is not well. I met the post-

man at the door and he gave me a newspaper for you."

She bustled forward, laid the newspaper in Cecil's lap, lighted the lamp and re-made the fire.

The young girl examined the wrapping, address, and postmark with interest.

"From Inverness," she exclaimed. "Mr. Crafton must have sent it."

"Or Lord Glenham, perhaps. But why should any one send a newspaper to you, Miss Cecil?"

"I will see," responded Cecil, tearing it open.

The newspaper was a copy of the *Court Journal*, and had been sent by Crafton with a purpose. He had made a journey to Inverness to procure the paper and to post it. He had caused, during his recent stay in London, to be inserted in it a notice, false as himself, which was meant for the eyes of Cecil Rosse alone.

The paragraph in question was marked with a heavy pen-stroke. Cecil's gaze was attracted to it at once. It read as follows :

"A marriage has been arranged, to take place in November, between Gordon, Earl of Glenham, and Lady Edith, widow of the late Sir Albert Trevor, Bart., and granddaughter of the Marquis of St. Leonards."

That was all. There were similar announcements above and below it, so that there appeared nothing of more importance in this one than in the

others. Its crafty author had well planned its effect. For one breathless moment Cecil stared at it, the black letters dancing on the page, her only sensation one of wild incredulity. She had believed herself prepared to hear the news of Lord Glenham's marriage to another. She had often assured herself that all hope was dead within her, but she knew now that she had deceived herself. She had hoped in spite of all. With a little gasp for breath, she arose, staggered across the floor into her inner room, and fell upon the bed faint as death.

"It is all over!" she thought. "All over at last! And I—what will become of me? Grant, oh! Heaven, that whatever I may suffer, he may be happy!"



## CHAPTER XVI.

### PULFORD ON THE TRACK.

Upon arriving at Castle Cliff, after her visit to Lady Glenham at Breezy Lodge, Lady Trevor hastened directly to her boudoir, flung off her bonnet and jacket, dismissed her maid, and rang her bell loudly, ordering a servant to send Mr. Pulford to her at once.

She was pacing the floor impetuously when her suitor appeared, her brows black as a thunder-cloud, her lips compressed, her manner indicative of the keenest anxiety and suppressed terror.

Mr. Pulford came in smiling and sleek, as usual, his florid face the incarnation of good nature, his hands stroking his sandy beard complacently. His smiles and complacence, however, vanished at sight of Lady Trevor's agitation.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "What has gone wrong? Has your maid stolen your diamonds, or—"

Lady Trevor turned upon him abruptly, her hard black eyes feverish in their burning gaze.

"I have promised to be your wife, Horace Pulford," she exclaimed.

"And you want to throw me over, is that it?" interrupted Pulford, savagely. "You have been to Breezy Lodge, have seen Lord Glenham, and want to back out of your engagement to me."

"No; don't be a fool!" cried the widow, impatiently. "I meant to say that I am your promised wife, therefore our interests are one."

"That is a self-evident truth."

"You have threatened me that if I refuse to marry you, you will send me to prison."

"Why recall words your obstinacy compelled me to utter? You have not refused—let the words of threatening be forgotten."

"Suppose I were poor, disgraced, in prison, what then? Would you befriend me?" demanded Lady Trevor, feverishly.

"You suppose an impossibility. Who can disgrace you, or cast you into prison—except me? Are you contemplating the idea of throwing me over?" again demanded Pulford, suspiciously. "Do you propose testing my power?"

"If I am false and unscrupulous, you are no better," cried Lady Trevor, not heeding his questions. "We are in one boat, Horace Pulford. We sink or swim together."

"You puzzle me—"

"I am in danger. I am threatened with a mortal peril!" ejaculated Lady Trevor, pausing before

him, dark and desperate. "I need your help, or I am utterly lost and ruined!"

"Are you mad?"

"Not yet, but I shall be unless something be done immediately," cried Lady Trevor. "Do you know who this girl is whom Lord Glenham loves—this Cecil Rosse whom he is determined to marry?"

"How should I know? An adventuress perhaps—"

"Listen. She is of English birth, and he found her at Zorlitz."

Pulford started, recoiling two or three paces.

"At Zorlitz?" he echoed, incredulously.

"At Zorlitz," repeated Lady Trevor. "Is it not a horrible fatality? You know, of course, who she is!"

"You must be mistaken. Lord Glenham could never have fallen in love with a servant. Not even a pretty face could tempt the fastidious earl to forget an uncultivated mind, peasant manners, and coarse, ignorant—"

"You mistake. The girl is not a servant. She has been brought up as a lady."

Pulford uttered a malediction.

"Why was the girl left at *that* house instead of one of the peasants' dwellings?" demanded Lady Trevor, resuming her rapid walk. "The pastor and his wife had been teachers. The old habits were strong upon them; the girl must have been bright and apt, and they taught her all accomplishments, as well as

the more solid branches of education ; and to-day she is able to take her place in English society and do honor to Lord Glenham's choice. He is determined to marry her. He will bring her to England ; Lord St. Leonards will see her. I am lost, Pulford, utterly lost and ruined !”

A wild groan was wrung from her tortured breast, and her despairing face grew wilder in its terror.

“ You are sure, Edith, very sure—”

“ Lady Glenham told me the whole story this morning, that the girl's origin was a mystery—and all the rest of it. In the shock of discovering who was the girl whom Lord Glenham loves I nearly betrayed myself. Had the countess not been unsuspecting she must have detected in my agitation my previous knowledge of the girl. To think that *she* is my rival in the earl's love—*she*—”

“ You forget that you are speaking to your promised husband,” said Pulford, dryly.

“ I did forget it. Yet, although I shall marry you, if I can surmount this peril, still I cannot forgive the one who has won the heart I coveted !” cried Lady Trevor, fiercely. “ What is to be done, Pulford ? The earl will go next month to Zorlitz, and he will bring the girl away as his wife. I have only a month of safety, only a month of enjoyment of this wealth, to gain which I risked my soul. Once let Lord St. Leonards meet the girl and hear her story, once let suspicion be aroused, and I shall kill myself. I will never be sent to prison—never. I

will never be disgraced. I will rather die by my own hand !”

“You are too excitable, Edith,” declared Pulford, regaining his coolness and self-possession. “You are too cowardly ever to have been concerned in a great crime. According to your own story, there remains a month of safety. In that time we can easily secure the future !”

“But we must not kill the girl !” said Lady Trevor, in a sibilant whisper, halting before him. “I have committed crime enough ; I will not have murder on my soul !”

“She need not die—unless we are driven to utter desperation. She must be removed from Zorlitz and placed beyond Lord Glenham’s reach forever. That must be attended to immediately.”

“And who will do it ?”

“I will. Your interests and mine are now one, as you have said. I have planned ever since Sir Albert’s death a marriage with you, Edith. I have looked forward to sharing your ill-gotten wealth, to becoming an influential member of society, to being a man of fashion, and I would commit any crime rather than give up my prospects now that they are so near realization. I shall start to-morrow morning for Zorlitz.”

Looking into his sinister countenance, all aglow with wicked resolve, Lady Trevor felt a thrill of reviving hope.

“Save me, Horace,” she exclaimed, “and all I

have shall be yours. I will marry you just as soon as she is out of my way, so that I shall have no fear of her."

"Then you will marry me next week. The girl shall be safely disposed of before that time. You must be careful to maintain your courage. If you give way before the marquis, his keen eyes will detect something wrong, and he may get upon the track of your secret."

"What shall you do with her?" asked Lady Trevor, in a whisper.

"I have formed no plan as yet. The thing has come upon me too suddenly. I shall determine upon some plan before I arrive at Zorlitz. Trust in me. It is *my* fortune that is at stake as well as yours, Edith; my future is imperilled with yours. Leave all to me!"

"I know that I can trust you! Good heavens! what should I do in this peril but for you?" cried the widow, shuddering. "Who could have foreseen that the pastor and his wife would have adopted and educated the girl after hearing that she was nameless and parentless? There is a fate in this, Horace, and a fear comes over me that fate may be stronger than we!"

"Nonsense. We shall conquer fate, Edith. As easily as you swept aside an obstacle once you can do so now. What trembling creatures women are when a bold work is to be done! Leave all to me and trust me! Now, come and sit by me before the

fire. Tell me all you heard this morning, just as you heard it. Throw all the light on my task which you can before I go !”

“I can't sit down. I am all on fire within. But I'll tell you what I heard,” replied the baronet's widow.

She paced the floor with hurried steps while she rehearsed the confidences the countess had imparted during her morning visit. Pulford listened attentively, lying back at his ease in a chair before the hearth.

“I think I won't wait till to-morrow morning,” he said, when she had finished. “I have caught your impatience, and will start to-day, within the hour. The yacht might take me down the coast, but I can go more quickly by crossing the country on horseback to Inverness.”

He arose and they exchanged a few words in parting. Then he sauntered carelessly out of the room, and fifteen minutes later Lady Trevor, watching from her window, saw him riding away from the castle.

As he began the descent of the rugged road, he halted, wheeled in his saddle, and waved his hat to her. He could not see her at her window, but knew very well that she must be watching, and the flutter of her white handkerchief responded to his signal. Then he started forward, disappearing from her view.

“I hope that he will arrive in time, and that he

will be successful," Lady Trevor said to herself. "I know him so well—if he deems the girl dangerous he would as lief kill her as a snake. But the guilt will not be mine if he does kill her. And I should feel safer if she were dead. I am afraid that I shall never know a minute's peace again while she lives. I had deemed her so safe in peasant obscurity and ignorance. But an educated person is so much more to be dreaded. If he deem violence necessary I shall not be sorry. And now I must keep up my mask of gayety and light-heartedness."

She descended to luncheon at the usual hour, and not a trace of her secret perturbation was to be seen upon her brunette face.

She devoted herself to the old marquis, who repulsed rather than encouraged her. Determined to win his favor, she fawned upon him until he, detecting her insincerity, sickened of her, and retreated out of doors into the park.

During the afternoon she shut herself up in her boudoir, but at dinner she was unusually gay. Some one remarked upon Mr. Pulford's absence, and she explained that he had been recalled to England upon important business, and would return within a week. She again devoted herself to Lord St. Leonards, and he, unable to conquer his aversion towards her, retired to his own apartment as soon as he could do so without rudeness.

The next day was that appointed for the dinner party. The Earl of Glenham, the countess, and

their guests, arrived in good time, and everything passed off happily. The baronet's widow was especially fascinating, and tried all the little arts she had found of use to her heretofore in society to win Lord Glenham's admiration and affection. Her toilet was exquisite, her jewels sumptuous. Her beauty was at its best. Her maid had exercised her choicest skill in touching up her ladyship's eyes and complexion with carmine, and bella-donna, and kohl, and various other cosmetics, and the hard, black eyes had been made to assume a soft and languishing expression, and the rouged lips wore a soft, alluring smile that many men would have found irresistible. But Lord Glenham was proof against all these fictitious charms. The memory of Cecil's splendid young beauty, her red-brown eyes with the golden glint in them, the red-brown hair with the golden glimmer, the slender, young shape with its lithe grace, the rare and perfect loveliness, was in his memory by day and by night, and in comparison with Cecil the widow seemed coarse and commonplace.

When the party broke up and the guests departed, Lady Trevor knew that her arts had been all in vain.

"But he shall never marry the girl," she said to herself, setting her teeth hard together, "and he shall marry me! Let Pulford serve my turn and rid me of the girl and I will rid myself of Pulford remorselessly, even if to do so I commit an awful

crime !” and she shuddered and grew pale under her rouge.

A friendly intimacy was established between Castle Cliff and Breezy Lodge. The Countess Glenham and Lady Trevor were together every day. The earl visited the castle often, but it was quite clear that he came only as a friend and not as a lover.

The day after the dinner party, the old Marquis of St. Leonard's, attended by his servant, left the castle in the carriage in which he had come from Inverness, on his return to that place. He journeyed on to London, disheartened and discouraged, not having been able to move Lord Glenham from his allegiance to Cecil Rosse, and feeling more than ever a repulsion to the granddaughter whom he hoped to see the wife of the young earl.

It was on the evening of the day after his arrival in London that he met the adventure in which Cecil Rosse had so opportunely come to his relief.

Lady Trevor, after the lapse of a few days, began to look for news from Pulford. The journey to Inverness was some sixty miles, and a groom occupied a full day in going and a full day in returning, with relays of horses upon the route. She detailed three grooms to this especial service, sending one every day in succession, but it was more than a week before her anxiety was relieved by the arrival of the looked-for letter. It came at

last, and she retired to her room to read it in solitude.

"Good news, I hope!" she muttered. "How I tremble! I am sure that Pulford has killed her. I know him so well. He has made all sure!"

She tore open the envelope. The letter read as follows:

ZORLITZ, *Sept. 10th*, 1874.

"MY DEAR EDITH:—As you see by the above address, I am in the depths of the Black Forest, in the very village we remember so well. Prepare yourself for bad news.

"The pastor, Herr Brocken, in whose care the girl was left, is dead. Frau Brocken is dead also, her death having preceded his by a year or so. If Lord Glenham knew of the pastor's death, he would fly to this place on the wings of love to befriend the girl left desolate and alone.

"But if he came he would not find her. The girl is gone! Worse still, she has gone to England. No one can give me her address. An old German servant went with her.

"Imagine my consternation at this complication of affairs. The girl in England—escaped from this obscurity—educated and intelligent—we have the most serious cause for alarm. There must be, as you say, some fate in this thing, but as I declared to you, *I shall conquer fate.*

"You are aware that Maldred Crafton, Lord Glen-

ham's especial friend and toady, quitted Breezy Lodge on business upon the very day after his arrival there. Well, he came secretly sneaking back here to make love to the girl when Glenham should be safely out of the way. He found that the pastor had died and the girl had gone to England, and he followed after her, although, of course, he could not obtain her address.

"Our difficulties, you thus see, are increased. The girl has two lovers. The earl is open and above board, an honorable gentleman, but I have my doubts of Crafton. Can he suspect anything? He is trying to win the girl secretly from his friend. Does he fancy that he possesses a clew to the mystery of Cecil Rosse? All this I must discover.

"I do not attempt to conceal from you the fact that new perils have sprung up in our path, in the girl's departure to England and Crafton's pursuit of her. But you do not know me if you think me daunted by this new aspect of affairs. Trust in me, Edith. I shall be more than a match for them altogether. One thing should reassure us—Crafton is as ignorant of the girl's new address as I am. I will find her before he can *and make all things sure*.

"I start for London to-night, and as I shall travel as fast as the mail I shall post this letter there. I may be detained in town some days. Write me at your town house, and let me know if Crafton has returned to Breezy Lodge. *You* might question him artfully and see if he has any suspicions of the truth,

and if he has a clew to the girl's present whereabouts ; but beware of exciting his suspicions as to your interest in the matter. He is as keen as a briar.

"In haste, your lover.

"HORACE PULFORD."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A STRANGE ALLIANCE.

Crafton imagined, when he had procured the insertion in the *County Journal* of the announcement of an engagement of marriage between Lord Glenham and Lady Trevor, that he had given the death-blow to any lingering hope that Cecil Rosse might have cherished in the depths of her soul that the man who had won her love might return to her. So far he had judged correctly. But he also thought that in her bitterness of disappointment, in her desolation and despair, Cecil might turn to him, Crafton, for comfort. He knew that old Gretchen had been won over to his cause, and that she would have no opportunity to sing his praises. He had told the old woman that he loved her young mistress, and desired to marry her ; that he would give her a luxurious home, servants to wait upon her, and everything she might desire. He had yet to learn that bribes like these cannot win a girl's



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"The old woman is on my side," he said to himself, on his return to Breezy Lodge from Inverness, after dispatching to Cecil's address the newspaper with the lying notice he had caused to be inserted in it. "The girl is sure to tire of toil after a little. I will take care not to be too precipitate in my proposal to her. I'll play the disinterested friend, the lover who expects nothing, but ventures to worship at her shrine, until the edge of her grief is worn off, and then will be my opportunity. She is proud; I'll make her pride serve me. If I play the game well, I shall win her. Only patience is required. I must not make my great and final move too soon!"

He arrived at Breezy Lodge at noon upon the second day after leaving Inverness.

The gentlemen were all gone out upon a shooting expedition. Lady Glenham, with her two or three especial friends, was still at the Lodge, having deferred her departure from the Highlands. The haughty lady was exceedingly miserable. She had been unable to obtain any promise from her son that he would give up all hope of marrying Cecil Rosse, and she had resolved not to leave him until she had obtained such a promise. Crafton heard the voices of the countess and her guests in the morning-room as he traversed the hall and mounted the grand staircase, and he smiled and said to himself:

"My lady is scarcely aware how she has been trying to play into my hands. Glenham has had a

hard time of it between his filial affection and his love for Cecil. But his love will triumph. It is not in nature for a man of twenty-eight, who has never before loved, to give up the passion of his life for his mother's senseless whim. He reverences Lady Glenham, but he won't permit her to stand between him and the girl he loves. He'd be a fool if he did, since my lady obstinately refuses to go to Zorlitz, or show any reason in her opposition. And yet the countess is right, too. A nameless foundling is not a fit match for the Earl of Glenham, who will in time be doubly a peer, when he becomes Marquis of St. Leonards."

He opened his door and passed into his chamber. It was chilly and dark, and he hastened to change his garments and descend to the dining-hall. Here a luncheon was served to him by the old butler, and he then retired to the smoking-room to indulge in a cigar.

This room—a favorite haunt with the earl's guests—was a long apartment occupying a wing of the dwelling. It was furnished in old-fashioned, substantial style, and the walls were hung with fowl-pieces, deers' antlers, and other insignia and trophies of the chase. A centre-table was laden with china jars of Latakia tobacco, pipes of every description in racks, boxes of cigars, taper stands, and various other paraphernalia necessary to the luxurious enjoyment of the odorous weed.

"Pity Glenham don't smoke," said Crafton to him-

self, drawing up a lounging chair to the table, and selecting a cigar with great care from the different sorts displayed. "A little vice of this sort stands in the place of big ones very often. I know I have dissipated an uncommon lot of viciousness in these puffs of smoke. It was my idea, having a room especially for smoking, and as I prevailed on Glenham to make this concession to hospitality, I certainly ought to have the chief benefit of it."

He lighted his cigar and began to smoke, reclining in his chair in a lazy attitude.

He had scarcely become absorbed in his meditations when a rap was heard upon the door, and Lady Glenham came in.

Crafton sprang up on the instant, tossing his cigar into a bronze receiver.

"Don't let me disturb you, Mr. Crafton," said the countess. "Pray resume your cigar. The butler told me that you had returned from Inverness. Did you perform the commissions I entrusted to you?"

"Yes. I matched the Berlin wools and gave them to a servant to hand to your maid."

He placed a chair as he spoke and the countess sank into it. He noticed that she was looking worn and troubled. The haughty face was colder and sterner than usual in its expression; her cold blue eyes looked dim, as if she had shed many tears of late.

"I beg you sit down, Mr. Crafton," she said, drawing a little nearer to the fire. "My son is gone out,

and I desire to have a little private conversation with you."

Crafton bowed and resumed his seat.

"You have been away a great deal since we arrived at Breezy Lodge," said the countess, "and may not be aware of the reason of my visit here. You see that I take it for granted that Gordon would have told you if he had had opportunity for much private confidence."

"I have the honor to be in Lord Glenham's confidence, Countess," replied Crafton, respectfully, "and I do know the reason of your visit to Breezy Lodge."

"You do? Then you also know of my failure in the purpose for which I came? I have desired to speak freely to you, Mr. Crafton. You are connected with our family, and are the distant kinsman of my son. He has always regarded you as a brother. You have great influence with him. I desire to enlist that influence to further my cause. It is hard for a mother to confess that her influence with her son is not supreme and all-powerful, is it not?"

"I cannot pretend to misunderstand you, Countess," said Crafton. "Your son has fixed his affections upon a girl of obscure family—"

Lady Glenham interrupted him with dignity.

"Let us state facts," she exclaimed. "He has fixed his affections, as you term it, upon a girl of no family whatever, whose only heritage is disgrace, a

girl without any name of her own, who does not know her origin, who is a living mystery !”

Crafton started. It will be remembered that he knew nothing whatever of Cecil's history, and believed her to be actually the niece of Herr Brocken, the earl having never imparted to him the confidence of the pastor concerning her.

“You must be mistaken, Countess—” he began.

“You cannot help Gordon's cause by feigning ignorance of the truth,” said Lady Glenham, severely. “My son told me the whole story, how the child was brought to the pastor's house years ago, and adopted by Herr Brocken and his wife. How the man who came with her desired her to be brought up as a servant. How nothing was ever seen or heard of the man afterwards. He sent, it is true, once a year, fifty pounds in Bank of England notes without word or comment, but he never wrote or came to see if the child lived. The truth is, he wanted her to die. No, Mr. Crafton, the girl is entirely English by birth, it cannot be doubted, and no relation whatever to the family that adopted her.”

It may be imagined that this story startled Crafton, but he did not doubt its verity.

“And whoever she is,” continued the countess, “she is not fit to be my son's wife. Perhaps her disreputable relations are living. Suppose, if my son married her, that those relations should turn up to blackmail us? The whole thing is too horrible.”

Crafton was silent, digesting the singular story he had heard, and careful not to betray that it was perfectly new to him.

Lady Glenham was also silent for some minutes, endeavoring to regain her self-possession. Presently she said :

"I came, not to repeat the particulars of the girl's disgraceful history, but to ask you some questions about the girl herself. Is she very beautiful?"

"As beautiful as an angel, madam !" declared Crafton, deeming it best to tell the truth, since Lady Glenham might possibly see Cecil some day herself.

"I supposed that she was beautiful. Gordon loved her for her face, I dare say," remarked Lady Glenham, bitterly. "I knew that the girl must have some extraordinary charm to win his love when so many lovely women have failed even to attract him. She is well educated, Gordon says."

"Thoroughly well educated. She is a genius, too, in drawing and painting, and has a marvelous talent for design," said Crafton. "She has a talent also for music, is bright and sweet and charming, well-bred—"

"In short, a feminine Admirable Crichton !" interrupted the countess, with a little sneer. "Your enthusiasm in regard to her is scarcely less than that of Gordon. I wonder that you, too, are not her lover."

Crafton's face flushed hotly.

"I see!" cried the countess. "You do love her? You are Gordon's rival?"

"No, Countess, not the earl's rival!" declared Crafton, energetically. "It is true that I admire Miss Rosse, but I should never dare raise my eyes to the lady whom Lord Glenham wishes to marry. I should never forget for an instant that I am his trusted friend. Besides," he added, "who would look at me when he is near? He is an earl, and will be a marquis besides, immensely rich, handsome as a Greek god. And I am only a commonplace person with six hundred a year, his friend, it is true, but a very humble satellite compared to the sun I attend. No, madam, I could never contemplate an act of treachery to one I love!"

"Nonsense, Mr. Crafton. Is it 'treachery' to save him from an unsuitable alliance? No, it is rather the work of a true and noble friend. This girl is not suitable to be your wife; how much less is she suitable to the Earl of Glenham and future Marquis of St. Leonards? The men of our family have always married rank. I cannot bear that my son should insult me so cruelly as to give me this creature as my daughter-in-law. I feel the disgrace the more keenly, because I know that he will repent the misalliance as Lord Harry Ravendale repented his. But you have no title to sustain, no friends to consult. You can marry the girl, if you choose, Mr. Crafton."

"She does not love me. She does love the earl—"

"You mean she loves his rank and wealth. Have you ever asked her to be your wife?"

"Never, madam. I could not be so treacherous to my friend."

"I thought I had disposed of that idea of treachery. I should consider you a good friend to my son if you would marry Miss Rosse yourself. Listen to me, Mr. Crafton. There is scarcely anything I would not do to save him from this marriage. If you will persuade Miss Rosse to marry you, I will settle an income of four hundred a year upon her for life. That amount, added to your own income, will render you independent, especially as you have a handsome country house."

Crafton's heart gave a quick bound. The offer was very tempting. He loved Cecil with a consuming passion. The mystery regarding her origin did not tend in the faintest degree to check the ardor of his pursuit. He could afford to gratify his own wishes. He had no lofty rank to maintain, no relatives to consult. He regarded the countess keenly and furtively, while he hesitated.

"I cannot offer you a bribe, Mr. Crafton," said Lady Glenham, marking his hesitation, "and you must not consider my offer to portion Miss Rosse in the light of a bribe. It would only be an offering of gratitude. I should be happy to receive your wife on equal terms upon all occasions, and I should never cease to be grateful to you."

"The earl would never forgive me."

"He would in time. He will marry another lady after his first anger against you and Miss Rosse has ceased, and years from now will laugh to think how he was out-generalled in his first love affair. Suppose he does not forgive you? Will not the lady be sufficient recompense for the loss of his friendship?"

"Now we return to our first difficulty. I cannot hope that she will marry me, after loving the earl."

"If she were to know her love for him to be hopeless, she would marry you, I am sure. Has she pride?"

"As much as yourself, Countess."

"That is strange. I might go to her and tell her that I would never consent to receive her as my son's wife. I might set the matter before her in such a light that, if she has the pride of a true woman, she would rather die than enter a family where she would be unwelcome and despised. I think I might have managed the case better. I will consent to see Miss Rosse. My son shall take me to Zorlitz next month."

Crafton was well aware that if the earl and countess should visit Zorlitz, his own recent visit to the same place would be detected, but it was not yet time for him to confess it. He therefore kept his own counsel.

"You have not yet given me your answer to my proposition, Mr. Crafton," said Lady Glenham. "If I assure you that in marrying Miss Rosse you do my son a great service, you can no longer hesitate."

You love this girl, and I will help you to win her. Shall not this be a compact between us?"

Crafton held out his hand.

"You persuade me against myself, against my friendship to your son, against my very principles!" he exclaimed, with a fine assumption of superior virtue. "I love Miss Rosse with all my soul. The dower you would give her would render my income ample for our wants. And as you think I would be doing right, I will enter the lists as her suitor."

Lady Glenham grasped his hand in unaffected fervor of gratitude. In her desire to save her son from a marriage she loathed and detested, her naturally fine sense of honor was blunted, and she failed to see her share of the compact in its true light.

"I thank you!" she ejaculated, with tears in her eyes, her haughty lips quivering. "I shall bless you while you live if you succeed. And you must succeed. Miss Rosse must be made to understand that the earl cannot make her his wife. I can help you in this, and I will."

"We will talk further upon the subject," remarked Crafton, as she arose and he followed her example. "Rest assured, if I can win Miss Rosse I will lose no time in doing so."

"I wish you would go to Zorlitz before we do; but perhaps it will be best that you should wait until after I see her. Do not be too precipitate, lest

you ruin everything. Hark! is not that the earl's voice? I must go."

She composed her features and swept out of the room, while Crafton relighted his cigar, resuming his seat.

In the great hall Lady Glenham encountered her son.

"Is anything wrong, Gordon, that you are home so early?" she asked, with quick anxiety.

"Nothing, except that I became separated from the others, bagged a quantity of game, and decided to return to the Lodge," said Lord Glenham, putting his arm around his mother's waist and leading her into the morning-room. "I thought that Crafton might have returned. What has happened, mother? You look happier than I have seen you of late."

"Mr. Crafton has returned, Gordon—"

"And these smiles are for him? Why, I thought you did not like him overmuch."

"People make mistakes sometimes, Gordon. I like Mr. Crafton very well indeed. But the smiles are not on account of his return. I have just had some conversation with him. I asked him about Miss Rosse. I could never bear to speak to him of her before."

"You asked him—what?"

"About her beauty, goodness and talent."

"And he said—"

"That she was beautiful as an angel, lovely, sweet

and good," sighed Lady Glenham. "He can hardly find words enough to praise her."

The earl's blond and noble face glowed.

"I could not have expected him to say less," he exclaimed. "He is a good and true friend, mother, God bless him!"

The countess winced. She had as high a love of truthfulness as any one; she detested a falsehood in whatever shape; she scorned a liar and a traitor. She had excused the part she had taken during her conversation with Crafton, saying to herself that "all was fair in love and war," and that she was justified in opposing secretly her son's wishes, and scheming to circumvent them. But now, looking into those honest gray eyes, so warm and loving, so truthful and tender, she hated herself and the part she had undertaken. Better, a thousand times better, the part of open enemy than that of secret traitor.

But she said to herself that she could not turn back in the course on which she had entered. She had made her son's friend her confederate and fellow-traitor, nothing remained but to go on in her distasteful work.

"I must tell you, Gordon, that all Mr. Crafton said, or could say," she exclaimed, hastily, "does not affect my decision never to receive Miss Rosse as my daughter-in-law. She may not be an adventuress. She may be good and honest, but none the less is she unfit to be your wife. I cannot forget her origin. I think you foolish, mad even, in your love

for her. But we won't go over the old ground again. You have heard my arguments until you know them by heart. I only wish to say," and the proud, gray head drooped and the stern and haughty face was averted, "that I consent to your visit to Zorlitz next month."

"Mother—"

"And I will go with you, Gordon," said the countess, more firmly. "I will see this girl for myself."

"My dear mother!" cried the earl, enraptured. "I knew your love for me and your good sense would triumph over your prejudices. You will see Cecil, and you will love her. She will find her way straight to your heart!"

He kissed her in a transport of loving gratitude.

"What would he say," thought the conscience-stricken mother, "if he knew that I am going with him to Zorlitz only the better to separate him from Miss Rosse? What would he say if he knew that no amount of beauty or goodness could penetrate the prejudice I have conceived against her? And what would he say if he knew that both his mother and his friend were leagued together to betray him? Yet, if I can save him from this marriage he contemplates, I shall be glad I betrayed him for his good!"



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FATE.

Lady Trevor had been thoroughly frightened by Mr. Pulford's letter. The danger that she had feared when Cecil Rosse was at Zorlitz, loomed up, doubly terrible and menacing, now that she knew Cecil to be in England. The path of crime, however successful, is a path of thorns. The baronet's widow scarcely slept at night; she started at every sound; her terrors grew upon her every hour. At times she longed to leave Castle Cliff and her guests and rush to London. It almost seemed to her, absurd as she really knew the idea to be, that Cecil Rosse had obtained some clew to her history, and that she had come to England to follow it up.

"And if fate or chance lead her in Lord St. Leonards' way, what may not happen?" she asked herself. "I am standing upon a volcano. Any instant may witness my ruin. All my hope is in Pulford. If he fails—what then? I wish I were in London. The month is more than half over, thank fortune!

What brought the girl to London? Love for the Earl of Glenham, or some suspicion of her identity? Impossible! I must be going mad. She could have no suspicion—none whatever. She came in pursuit of the earl, the bold creature. I will most certainly question Mr. Crafton, as Pulford urges!"

The opportunity was not afforded her until the third day after the receipt of Mr. Pulford's letter.

Upon that day Lady Trevor and her guests were invited to dine at Breezy Lodge. They drove over from Castle Cliff in carriages, and arrived just before nightfall of the bright autumnal day. Lord Glenham met them at the door, and the ladies were shown up to one dressing-room, the gentlemen to another. When Lady Trevor descended to the drawing-room with her half-dozen lady-guests in her train, they found the countess, stately as any queen and as gracious, waiting just within the door to receive them.

Lady Glenham bent her gray head to kiss the handsome brunette face of the baronet's widow, looking approval at the brightness of the latter in her dinner-dress of pink brocade, with ruffles of old point lace, and ornaments of diamonds.

"How very handsome she is!" thought the countess, her eyes following the tall and rounded figure. "Why cannot Gordon love her? We have never done her justice—the marquis and I—on account of our dislike to her mother. But Edith is

undeniably a beauty, and would be a charming wife for my son, in spite of the fact that she is some years older than he. If he would only admire her and forget Miss Rosse, I should be happy!"

Lady Trevor's first glance about the long drawing-room was in quest of Mr. Crafton. He was standing near the hearth, and her eyes brightened at sight of him. She bowed to him graciously, but there was no opportunity for speech at that moment, the other gentlemen claiming attention.

Lord Glenham proved very attentive to Lady Trevor, but any one could see that there was no love in his looks or thoughts as regarded her. They were kinspeople, and he had for many years been her friend, trying to reconcile her grandfather to her, and regarding her almost as a sister. He knew her to be older than himself, and it had never entered into his mind to look upon her in the light of a possible wife for himself. He took her into dinner, and she occupied a place at his right hand, the countess having so arranged it. He was in better spirits than he had been of late, and Lady Trevor's secret love for him grew stronger under his new warmth and geniality. She even, in spite of reason, fancied that he was beginning to regard her with something of tenderness akin to her own.

The gentlemen returned to the drawing-room with the ladies. Presently, one of the guests—a lady—sat down at the piano and played a brilliant operatic air. Lord Glenham was discussing the

shooting with one of the gentlemen from Castle Cliff, and Maldred Crafton sat alone near the window, half hidden by the curtain, watching the scene and listening to the music.

Lady Trevor swept across the room and sank down into a fauteuil beside him.

"When did you return, Mr. Crafton?" she asked, with flattering interest. "I heard yesterday that you were gone away again, this time to Inverness."

"Yes," replied Crafton, in a leisurely voice. "I have been to Inverness, and returned at noon to-day. It's a long, hard ride over these roads, Lady Trevor, particularly when one goes and returns in so short a space of time."

"You have friends at Inverness, I suppose?" said Lady Trevor, playing with her fan.

Mr. Crafton looked surprised.

"Oh, no," he answered. "I went over only on business, to fulfill a few commissions, and that sort of thing."

"I have been longing to ask you a few questions. Mr. Crafton," said the widow, with a confidential air, "Something about your adventures of last summer, you know."

"So!" thought Crafton. "That's why she's playing sweet to me. Wants to hear about Miss Rosse. She is jealous of Lord Glenham, that's the secret! Ask your questions, my charming widow, I shall be delighted to answer them!"

He repeated the latter sentence aloud in a more respectful form of address.

"I want to ask you about this Miss Rosse," said Lady Trevor, in a very low voice. "Is she beautiful?"

"Remarkably so."

"Good and intelligent?"

"Both to excess;" and an amused look crept into Crafton's eyes.

Lady Trevor saw that he had mistaken her motive for that of jealousy, and was secretly pleased.

"Do you think that she loves Lord Glenham?" asked the widow.

"I know it. And he loves her with all his soul. Whether they will marry or not remains to be seen."

Lady Trevor set her lips firmly together for an instant, repressing the words that rose to her lips. She intended to be very cautious, and pursued her inquiries carefully, but Crafton merely answered them categorically, and gave her no information she had not previously possessed. She dared not betray her own knowledge of Herr Brocken's death and Cecil's departure from Zorlitz, and all her skilful questioning utterly failed to draw the desired information from Mr. Crafton. She finally gave up the attempt in despair.

"He is too deep for me," she thought, excusing herself gracefully and seeking a new resting-place. "Altogether too deep. I can do nothing with him."

I don't believe that he knows the girl's present address, however."

Crafton's amused smile deepened as he looked after her.

"Jealous as a Turk," he said to himself. "Well, my lady, if all goes well with me, you'll have plenty of time to try your arts and fascinations on Glenham. And you may win him yet, so don't despair!"

At half past nine the carriages were ordered. The long twilight was deepening into a bright and moonlight night, when the guests took their leave and returned to Castle Cliff.

Before she slept the widow wrote a letter to Mr. Pulford narrating her discussion with Mr. Crafton and her utter lack of success. This letter was sent on its way to Inverness by a mounted messenger soon after daybreak.

It was a week before Lady Trevor heard again from Mr. Pulford. He stated that he should not return to the Highlands, being occupied with his search for Miss Rosse. He informed her that the Marquis of St. Leonards was in town, and advised her to come to London on leaving Castle Cliff, in order to strengthen her position with her grandfather. He wrote that he had had no success whatever in his search so far, but was not inclined to despair. He desired to consult with her as soon as convenient.

The month seemed to drag yet more heavily to Lady Trevor as it neared its close. She was impa-

tient to be off to the southward, but concealed her impatience as cleverly as possible.

Lady Glenham quitted Breezy Lodge a day or two after she had made her compact with Crafton, and after she had had a second private interview with him, and returned to England.

Upon the last day of the month Lady Trevor and her guests embarked upon her yacht, and set sail for England.

The pretty *Undine* was attended by fair winds and weather during her trip to Glasgow, at which port the voyagers disembarked, proceeding by rail to London.

Lady Trevor arrived at her town-house late one evening in early October. Mr. Pulford was waiting for her, the house was aired and warmed and prepared for her reception, and she passed into her luxurious drawing-room, followed by her suitor, while her maid proceeded up-stairs.

"Well," said the widow, wearily, "any news?"

"Of the girl? Not any," answered Mr. Pulford. "I've searched high and low for her. Of course I didn't expect to find her immediately, but I fear I shall not find her at all. It's hard work, searching for one girl among millions of people."

"She certainly has not communicated with Lord Glenham," asserted Lady Trevor. "Do you suppose that Crafton knows her address?"

"No. How should he learn it more easily than I? I think she wishes to hide from Glenham and

Crafton, and if my theory is true so much the better. I informed Lord St. Leonards of your intended arrival, and requested him, in your name, to call and see you. I met him in Bond street this morning, but he said that you would be fatigued, and he would not intrude upon you for a day or two."

"Then he intends to visit me? Good. I'll go up and dress, Pulford. You must stay to dinner, and we will have the evening to ourselves."

"We may not have another evening alone together for some time, Edith, for the date of your return to town has been heralded in the newspapers. And that reminds me, there was a notice in the *Court Journal* a week or two ago to the effect that you were engaged to be married to Lord Glenham. Now whose work is that? Yours?"

"Mine? How can you ask such an absurd question? I did not even know there had been such a report. Some news monger invented it!"

"A contradiction must be sent," said Mr. Pulford, sullenly. "I don't like it. It can't be Lord Glenham's work, because he loves Miss Rosse. I was sure the notice had been written with a purpose."

Lady Trevor laughed and withdrew, going to her room.

Mr. Pulford dined with her and spent the evening, going away to his club at ten o'clock.

The next morning, the stream of visitors, who usually thronged about the wealthy widow, began to arrive.

Lady Trevor denied herself to some, and saw one or two. She was in her morning-room, lolling in her easy-chair, having just dismissed her dress-maker, when a servant appeared with a card on a tray.

"The person wishes to see your ladyship on important business," he said.

"Madame Lange," repeated Lady Trevor, reading the card. "Show her up, James."

Madame Lange, the embroideress and fancy work dealer of Regent street, was accordingly shown into Lady Trevor's presence.

She had a parcel very carefully enveloped in her hands. She bowed low to the baronet's widow, who received her graciously.

"I have sent to inquire once or twice when your ladyship was expected at your town-house," said Madame Lange, "and I saw this morning in the newspaper that you were come, so I took the liberty of calling at once."

"And you have brought the opera-cloak I ordered? Let me see it. I warn you that I am very fastidious, Madame Lange. I want something unique, uncommon, something that no other lady has."

"And you have got it here, my lady," said Madame Lange, unpinning her parcel. "There, my lady, what do you think of that?"

She flung open the cloak, a rose-tinted cashmere, richly and elaborately embroidered with convolvuli

in silver thread, with vines and leaves. The design was artistic, the work was perfect. Lady Trevor uttered a little cry of delight.

"It is magnificent!" she exclaimed. "You sent to Paris for it, I know, madame!"

"No, my lady. It was done in London, by one of my workwomen. She designed it and embroidered it. Is it not lovely?"

Lady Trevor examined it closely. She could find no fault in any point. The garment suited her and she asked the price.

Madame Lange named a sum of six times the amount she had paid Cecil Rosse for doing the work.

"I'll keep it," said the widow, throwing the cloak over a chair the better to display its beauties. "You've a treasure in that woman, Madame. I'll have her embroider a dress for me. Is she French?"

"She seems English, but has a pretty little foreign way with her, my lady. Her work is French out and out. Her name is English, unless she spells it in a foreign way. It's Rosse—Cecil Rosse—"

Lady Trevor sprang forward as if electrified.

"What name?" she gasped.

Madame Lange repeated it in wondering surprise.

"Cecil Rosse! And she seems foreign? Where does she live?" cried Lady Trevor, excitedly.

"Do you know of her, my lady?"

"I? No!" said the widow, calming herself. "I

know nothing of her. I asked because I had a friend of that name once, a widow—”

“This Miss Rosse is a young girl, who is always attended by an old German servant. I don’t know her address,” said Madame Lange, lying, because she believed that Lady Trevor desired to employ the embroideress without her intervention. “If you like her work, I shall be pleased to take your orders, my lady.”

“I am delighted with the work. I wish her to embroider me a costume, but I must see her personally,” said Lady Trevor. “Send her to me to-day and I will discuss designs with her. I care nothing about the price, and leave that to you. I am willing to pay liberally—whatever you ask.”

Madame Lange, her brief suspicions lulled, arose and said :

“Very well, my lady. It shall be as you say. I will send Miss Rosse to you to-day.”

As soon as the embroideress had departed, Lady Trevor, in high excitement, despatched a servant in search of Mr. Pulford.

“To think,” she said to herself, “that the girl should be thrown into my very hands ! It is fate. And now to be rid of her forever !”



## CHAPTER XIX.

### AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

Lady Trevor stood upon the threshold of her wicked success. She was about to discover Cecil Rosse, to meet her face to face ! Her excitement deepened with every instant. She paced the floor of her morning-room like a caged panther. Her dark face grew darker still with sinister joy ; her hard black eyes glittered like polished jet beads ; her rouged lips were set together in a hard, tense line. She looked all evil in that hour of joy, like a lost soul reveling in deeds of darkness.

"Oh, why doesn't Pulford come ?" she muttered, impatiently. "We ought to consult together before her arrival. What are we to do?"

Her excitement had grown to fever-heat before her messenger returned with the statement that Mr. Pulford had been found at his lodgings and would present himself at her ladyship's house immediately.

The message had scarcely been delivered when Lady Trevor's trusty ally made his appearance.

He entered the morning-room after his usual noiseless fashion, and paused an instant unseen just inside the door, watching the tall, full figure in its long maize-colored robe, sweeping the floor in haste, to and fro, the dark face gleaming, the pointed, cruel-looking teeth shut tightly into the full under lip, the eyes full of wicked fire. Then he broke the silence, exclaiming :

“Rehearsing tragedy, Edith? What’s the matter?”

Lady Trevor started and rushed up to him, crying, exultantly :

“She’s found, Horace; she’s found!”

“Who is found? Who has been lost?” demanded Mr. Pulford, with an air of bewilderment.

“For whom have you been searching during the past month? Whose presence in England endangers my liberty and my fortune?” cried Lady Trevor, in a fierce whisper. “Whose existence is a continual menace to us?”

“The girl? You don’t mean—”

“I do!” interrupted Lady Trevor, vehemently. “Fate has thrown her in my way! She is coming here, to this very house, to see me!”

“Cecil Rosse?”

“Cecil Rosse!”

Mr. Pulford stared, amazed, stupified.

“Do you see that cloak?” exclaimed Lady Trevor, pointing to the glittering garment upon the chair where she had thrown it. “Madame Lange, the fancy work dealer, who has done much work for me,

brought it to me this morning. I asked her if it had been done in France. She answered no, that a young girl named Cecil Rosse had done it, and I bade her send the girl to me for more orders. She will be here to-day, this very hour, perhaps—"

"The girl may not be the same."

"The name is not common. It is the same. Madame Lange said that her Miss Rosse is always attended by an old German serving-woman. Of course, it is the same. There cannot be a shadow of doubt."

"Calm your excitement, Edith. If the girl were to come now you would betray everything. If she does come, what shall you say to her?"

"I shall give her work. I shall make her trust me. I shall be as gentle and gracious as a tigress playing with her victim. But what must come afterwards you know as well as I. I cannot have her at liberty. I cannot live in terror of her. I cannot risk the discovery of her by the Marquis of St. Leonards, or by Lord Glenham. She must be got rid of!" and Lady Trevor hissed the words into the ear of her confederate.

"I understand. Whatever we do, we will do together and share the guilt alike," said Mr Pulford, coolly. "I am willing to do anything to retain in our hands the magnificent fortune you now hold. Whatever menaces our possession of that fortune I shall sweep from our path as remorselessly as I would destroy a fly."

"I will have no murder!" breathed Lady Trevor, shuddering. "Not that, Pulford. It cannot be necessary."

"Perhaps not. We shall see. But if it should prove necessary we shall not hesitate even to commit murder," said Mr. Pulford, grimly. "We—you, I mean, in particular—have gone too far to stop even at murder, Edith. Murder would be preferable to suicide. You may be forced to one or the other."

"Hush! I cannot bear such words even from you. Let us try anything rather than commit the worst of crimes—"

"I am willing, if milder measures will answer. Do you think I am anxious to imbue my hands in blood unless I am driven to it? The girl must be disposed of; but how? Sit here by me on this sofa, Edith, and we will try to arrive at some decision."

They sat down near together, and conversed in whispers for a long time.

An hour—two hours—passed. Lady Trevor began to watch the clock with feverish anxiety.

"The girl must be here soon," she exclaimed. "I will see her alone and engage her to do some embroidery for me. After half an hour or so you must come into the room, quite carelessly, as if in search of a book, and observe her, and take good care to fix her features in your memory. We will be very careful not to excite her suspicions. We understand each other, Pulford."

"We do. And as soon as this girl is safely out of our way you will marry me?"

"I promise. You will have a right to share in the fortune you will have helped me to retain."

The luncheon hour had arrived, and still Miss Rosse did not make her appearance. The confederates lunched together, but neither made any pretense to appetite, and returned as speedily as possible to the morning room.

It was three o'clock, and the conspirators were growing impatient, when a double knock was heard upon the outer door of the dwelling. Both started.

"That is not a work-woman's knock," said Mr. Pulford. "It is some visitor—"

A servant entered.

"A young person wishes to see your ladyship," he announced. "The name is Miss Rosse."

"Show her up, James," exclaimed Lady Trevor, flushing and paling with singular rapidity. "Let her come up at once."

The servant disappeared. Mr. Pulford hastily beat a retreat to the library. A minute later Cecil Rosse was ushered into the morning room.

Lady Trevor was standing before the hearth, looking intently into the fire, her heart beating wildly, her dark face pale as ashes, her manner full of agitation. She made a violent effort at self-control, and turned slowly, facing her visitor.

She had expected to behold a beautiful girl, but

she was amazed at the vision of beauty, grace, and loveliness that met her eyes.

The lithe and slim figure, dressed simply in black that fitted it exquisitely, the star-like face, and its splendid young beauty, the radiant eyes, with the golden glint in their red-brown depths, the spirit and tenderness expressed in the lovely mouth, all impressed her with startling force and vividness. She marked the simple, girlish dignity, the unconscious hauteur of carriage, the lofty poise of the small and beautiful head, and a sudden terror possessed her.

This a working-girl ! this an embroideress come for work ! Why, she looked like a young princess. Lady Trevor said in her own heart fiercely that she had been deceived, that Madame Lange had lied to her, that this was no girl in search of work, but one who had been wronged and who had come demanding her rights !

The guilty woman trembled with her fear. And even in that moment of terror, her heart was riven by a keen pang of jealousy. This girl, who looked like a young goddess, had won Lord Glenham's heart. After loving Cecil Rosse he would never love Lady Trevor, that the latter felt convinced. She felt an awful impulse of hatred toward Cecil. In spite of her reluctance to do murder, she could have strangled the girl in that first moment with her convulsively-working fingers.

"You wished to see me, madam ?" asked Cecil's

clear, sweet voice, breaking the silence. "I am Miss Rosse, sent to you by Madame Lange."

"Ah, yes," said the widow, hoarsely. "Be seated, Miss Rosse. I—I am not quite well, but will attend to you directly."

Cecil sat down as directed. The manner of Lady Trevor struck her as very singular, and something in the appearance of the tall brunette impressed her deeply. But before she had time to analyze her feelings, Lady Trevor was calm and ready to enter upon the apparent business of the visit.

"Madame Lange tells me, Miss Rosse," said the baronet's widow, "that you embroidered this opera cloak. I was quite sure that the work is French. Did you really design and embroider it yourself?"

Cecil replied in the affirmative.

"It is marvelously well done," said Lady Trevor, taking a seat near that of Cecil. "And it is so accurate and so charmingly designed that I knew you must have learned your trade in Paris!"

Cecil reddened. Her pride was stung, and her manner was a little touched with haughtiness as she responded:

"I did not learn to embroider in Paris, but in Germany. The art was taught me as an accomplishment. I am glad that my work has pleased you, madam, and shall be glad of further orders."

"I was very positive that the work was French," said Lady Trevor. "You have certainly a great

deal of talent, Miss Rosse. By the way, is yours a German name?"

"I am not German," answered Cecil, quietly. "I was brought up in a little village of the Black Forest, but I am of English birth."

"Singular! Your parents settled there, perhaps?" asked Lady Trevor, carelessly.

The girl's face grew paler than usual.

"I have no parents," she said, with her head held a little higher than before. "I was brought up by a German Lutheran pastor and his wife, but they were not my kindred."

She was beginning to wonder at the interest which Lady Trevor seemed to take in her history. The widow, having satisfied herself of the girl's identity, hastened to change the subject.

"I am so delighted with your work, Miss Rosse," she remarked, with assumed carelessness, "that I should like to engage your services exclusively during the next few months. I may as well tell you what all the world knows—I am about to be married."

Cecil bowed gravely, her lips growing white. She had suspected that her new patroness was the lady whom report declared to be the betrothed wife of Lord Glenham.

"If you know anything about fashionable society," said Lady Trevor—"and even a sewing-girl, I presume, takes an interest in the aristocracy from which

she derives a support—I dare say you have heard my name linked with that of the Earl of Glenham."

Cecil again bowed. She could not speak. The hard, black eyes of her enemy read her secret agitation, and glittered with triumph.

"I am to be married in the course of a few weeks," continued Lady Trevor. "We shall spend the winter abroad. Now, the work I have in hand would require your residence at one of my country-houses throughout the winter."

Cecil looked surprised.

"You would see nothing of me or my husband," continued Lady Trevor, as the girl did not speak. "The servants would remain in the house, of course, but they would not in any way interfere with your comfort—to the contrary, they would have strict orders to treat you with every consideration."

"What is the work you wish me to do?"

"I possess some priceless old tapestry that has been in our family for hundreds of years," explained Lady Trevor. "It is moth-eaten and rat-bitten, but enough of it remains to render its renovation desirable. The design is rather elaborate and intricate. The hand of an artist is required in its restoration. Pieces of canvas require to be fitted in with the utmost precision and nicety, and the design carried out upon them. Until now I have never found any one to whom I would entrust the precious work. Will you undertake it?"

Cecil hesitated.

"The pay shall be liberal," said Lady Trevor, hastily. "As I require not only manual dexterity, but thought, research, invention, I am willing to pay one hundred pounds for the work, which will require the winter for its successful accomplishment."

"The pay is more than liberal, madam," said Cecil, "but I am not sure that I can accept the place you offer me. I have an old servant from whom I cannot be separated—"

"It is not necessary that you should be. She can accompany you."

Cecil reflected seriously, while her enemy watched her as a cat watches a mouse. The girl felt that she was very pleasantly situated at Queen's Crescent, her landlady was kind and motherly, and the place had already begun to seem home-like to her. But then she had a longing for the country, and often felt stifled in the close quarters of her lodgings. The sum offered for her winter's services was munificent. She could keep Gretchen with her, and in the spring they would have a handsome little extra fund to add to their store.

Against these considerations were to be placed certain drawbacks and objections. She felt that she could never meet Lord Glenham again. She loved him with all her heart, and could not bear to look upon his face when he should be the husband of another. How could she work for his wife?

The passionate young soul thrilled with jealous pain. How could she take money from the woman who had supplanted her in Lord Glenham's heart?

Lady Trevor witnessed the struggle going on in Cecil's mind, and awaited its conclusion.

"I did not deem it necessary to say that your servant, with other necessities, would be included in the price of your services, and be exclusive of the hundred pounds," said the widow. "I can see, Miss Rosse, that you have been brought up as a lady. You would be treated as such at my house. The servants will regard you as a superior. You will be virtually mistress of the house, since I shall be abroad with my husband, and shall not return until your work is done."

"Where is your house, Lady Trevor?"

"In the northern part of Yorkshire, near the coast. It is remote from a railway station, and if you decide to go, I shall be glad to send you to Grey-court—that is the name of my place—in my yacht. It will be in London to-morrow, and is to sail to-morrow evening for Greycourt."

This was false, the *Undine* being at that moment on her way down the west coast from Scotland *en route* for London. But the plans of Lady Trevor and Mr. Pulford were well laid, and this statement was in accordance with them.

"I cannot give you a decided answer at this moment, Lady Trevor," replied Cecil. "I must first counsel with my servant, who is my only

friend. If you will kindly give me until evening to consider your kind offer, I will then send you my answer."

The widow could scarcely conceal her disappointment. She had expected the girl to accept her offer without much delay.

"If you desire to achieve an independence, Miss Rosse, I am sure that you could not do better," she exclaimed. "And the work would interest an artist. Of course, you must do as you think best, however."

Before Cecil could make any response, Mr. Pulford sauntered into the room. Under cover of searching for a book, he stared curiously at the young girl, starting at the sight of her splendid beauty and radiant loveliness.

Cecil colored under his gaze, and arose to her feet.

"If you will excuse me now, madam," she said, courteously, "I will return to my lodgings and counsel with my servant."

The door-knocker at this moment sounded violently. Lady Trevor paused to listen. Before she could collect her thoughts sufficiently to answer Cecil the door opened, and the Maaquis of St. Leonards stalked into the room.



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SUCCESS OF THE CONSPIRATORS.

The consternation of the two plotters at the unexpected and unwelcome appearance of the old lord was too great for words.

Lady Trevor's visage grew livid in its swift pallor. Her hard black eyes filled with sudden horror. She clutched at her chair with uncontrollable faintness. Mr. Pulford stood like a statue, scarcely less startled and horrified.

The marquis surveyed them both in astonishment. His keen old eyes could not fail to mark their agitation, but he attributed it to a wrong cause.

"Excuse my unceremonious entrance, Edith," he exclaimed. "I would not let the footman announce me, especially as he said that you were not engaged with visitors."

Lady Trevor made a vigorous effort at self-control.

"You are always welcome, grandpapa," she said, her voice quavering in spite of herself. "I am delighted to see you!"

"You look so !" said the marquis, dryly.

Cecil had made a movement to withdraw. That movement drew the marquis' attention upon her. He had not previously noticed her presence, now he stared at her, bewildered. He recognized her at first glance, as she also recognized him.

"Miss Rosse !" he ejaculated, his stern and haughty old face kindling into sudden warmth and pleasure. "Is it possible ? I am delighted to see you !"

Lady Trevor and Mr. Pulford exchanged looks of utter amazement and horror.

The marquis approached Cecil, holding out his hand. She, blushing like a rose, placed her small hand in his, and faltered a response. Something in his looks and tones thrilled her strangely.

"Grandpapa," said Lady Trevor, huskily, "I did not know that you were acquainted with Miss Rosse !"

"I owe to Miss Rosse the preservation of my life and property," said the old marquis. "I was attacked by two miscreants upon the night after my return to town in a dark little street out of Regent street. The rascals threw me down, clutched my throat, and would have strangled me and rifled my person at the same moment if Miss Rosse had not come to my rescue. She had seen the struggle, and, like the brave young lady she is, she gave a scream for help and came flying towards me. The two rascals took to their heels. I have thought of you

very often since that night, Miss Rosse, and am very glad to see you again. I am delighted to find that you are one of Lady Trevor's friends."

It never occurred to the old lord that this graceful, high-bred, beautiful girl was less than Lady Trevor's social equal.

"The service I was enabled to render your lordship was too small to merit your gratitude," said Cecil, modestly. "I trust that you have quite recovered from the effects of the assault."

"Quite, I thank you. Do not let me keep you standing, Miss Rosse!"

"I was about to go when you came in," replied Cecil. "Permit me to bid you good-morning."

She bowed to Lady Trevor, to Mr. Pulford, and to the marquis, who opened the door for her, and watched her departure with something of wistful sadness in his grand old eyes.

"The loveliest girl I ever saw in my life!" he ejaculated, when the house door closed after her. "Who is she, Edith? The heiress of some noble house, I know."

Mr. Pulford discreetly withdrew into the inner room, leaving the marquis and his granddaughter alone together.

The widow felt a great burden lifted from her, as Lord St. Leonards indicated by his question that the girl's history was not known to him.

"You are mistaken, grandpapa," she exclaimed,

"Miss Rosse is not what you think. She is only a sewing girl."

"Impossible! She! This is not a proper subject for jest, Edith," said Lord St. Leonards, sternly.

"I am not jesting. The girl has been sewing for me. Do you see my cloak? Is it not a perfect work of art? Miss Rosse embroidered it. I consider her one of the foremost in her trade."

"But there must be some mistake, Edith. Miss Rosse is a thorough lady, well-educated, and well-bred. She is better fitted for a governess, if she is poor, than for manual labor."

"Ah, beauty blinds the eyes of men!" cried Lady Trevor, with assumed playfulness. "Miss Rosse has the outside varnish and veneer of good breeding, but she is of obscure parentage. Why, she was brought up on the Surrey side, on some humble street of Southwark, and her father is a shoemaker. She has one sister who is a milliner. On account of her beauty this girl has had superior advantages, which she has well improved. She looks quite like a lady."

The marquis looked staggered at this declaration, uttered with every appearance of truthfulness.

"If this girl be what you say, Edith," he exclaimed, "then I will never more believe in blood. Generations of culture and gentle living are supposed to have a refining effect upon the human body. This young lady shows, if ever human being did, the effects of such culture and refinement among her

ancestors. We of the aristocracy, as we call it, are no better, perhaps, than our neighbors of Southwark, but they, for generations, have had time only for labor, thought only for wants and how to gratify them. Our ancestors have been among those who made the laws; they have been leaders; they have cultivated their minds and let their muscles dwindle into feebleness, and the result is that we look different, and are different from the people who have been obliged always to toil. Miss Rosse cannot belong to such a family as that you describe. I should as soon expect to see a rose blossom upon an apple tree."

"Your theory is very fine, grandpapa," said the widow, "but in this case you are mistaken. Miss Rosse is certainly pretty, she has been educated above her station, and appears like a lady, but she is not ashamed of her humble origin or of her humble relations."

"I can well believe that. Granting once that she has the origin you say, I know that she would honor her parents, if they were beggars even. Her pure, sweet eyes show that though she is very proud, her pride is not vanity. She is incapable of looking with scorn upon any one, however humble."

"You seem to know her well, grandpapa."

"I judge from her face. I am a student of physiognomy. I never saw her but twice—that night in the street and now. But, Edith, I never met a

person who impressed me so singularly and deeply. Do you know her address?"

The widow felt a new and keen alarm, which she did her best to conceal.

"She lives in Southwark, but she did not tell me the street and number," she replied, with pretended indifference. "She will bring home fresh work for me next week. I'll ask then for her exact address."

"If my little Alba had lived she would have been about the age of Miss Rosse," said the old marquis, thoughtfully. "And this young girl's eyes somehow remind me of the baby eyes of my little grandchild, a deep gloom with sunlight in its midst."

Lady Trevor stooped to pick up her handkerchief. Her breathing was strangely hurried. The marquis could not see her face.

"Alba might have looked as Miss Rosse does," he continued, as if thinking aloud. "But then I never see a young girl but I think of the little child I idolized. Oh, Edith, I can never forgive you for keeping her from me during those last months of her little life ! I can never forgive you for letting her die away from me. I parted from her when she was all baby-beauty and brightness. You sent her back to me in her coffin."

"You are unjust, cruelly unjust, grandpapa ! I would to Heaven I had died in her stead !" cried Lady Trevor, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "You blame me for what I could not help—"

"If I could only be sure of that. I doubt you Edith, in spite of all my efforts to believe in you. The little creature stood between you and a colossal fortune—"

"And you think that I may have killed her? Why, I was not twenty-one years old at the time!"

"You were old in many respects, and you were the wife of one of the worst men who ever disgraced the name of Englishman. I believe that he would not have scrupled to kill a little child who stood between him and a great inheritance. I may be wrong. If so, forgive me. But you were greatly to blame for not bringing her to me immediately after her mother's death. That you did not do so, I will never forgive you! You benefited by Alba's death. That fact in itself is an accusation against you."

"You are very cruel and unjust to me. I am friendless and alone!" murmured Lady Trevor, in passionate reproach. "Do you call this reconciliation, my lord? I cannot bear such scenes as these. I will not. If you will treat me as your grandchild whom you have forgiven, I will devote my life to your happiness, but to be accused of horrible crimes is more than I can bear."

"We will have no more of such accusations, Edith," said the marquis, in a subdued voice, repenting his outbreak. "The sight of Miss Rosse brought it all back to me, my grief and loss, and the memory of the little dead child in her baby-

beauty and sweetness. I live a lonely life, full of haunting memories. If I had only a family about me I should be content. I am old ; I was made for domestic life. I go home to great desolate rooms. where only servants enter to break my solitude. I sit alone at my table, with my butler and footman to wait upon me, but with no friendly face near, no kindly voice to speak to me. It's a hard, barren, miserable life."

"You need some one to cheer you, dear grand-papa," said Lady Trevor, changing her seat for one nearer to him. "Let me come to St. Leonards. I would ask nothing better than to devote my life to securing your comfort and happiness."

"Very prettily said, but I cannot have you there yet. I should break out upon you in stormy scenes like this one, until your life became a burden. I feel very bitterly towards you still at times. I suspect you of crime towards your innocent little step-sister. Heaven grant I wrong you, Edith ! But for the present you must see that we are better apart. I loved the Earl of Glenham as if he were my son. If he can be weaned from his foreign adventuress, and if you and he should marry, I shall be glad to have a place at your fireside. Gordon's presence will turn our antagonism into harmony. Until that marriage, I shall come to see you often, and desire your visits, but we will not have one home."

"And you will continue to bear your loneliness, grandfather?"

The marquis flushed with a new idea.

"I do not know that that is quite necessary, Edith," he answered. "You say that Miss Rosse belongs to an obscure family, and that she is well educated. She is out of her proper place where she is. She is made for a life of refinement. Edith, I will adopt her, if she will consent."

"Grandfather!"

"Does the project seem wild? I will adopt her as my grandchild, ward, whatever she may choose. She shall brighten my lonely home, sing to me, write my letters, and fill out my desolate existence with new interests. I think she could not refuse my offers."

"It is not proper. The world will talk," ejaculated Lady Trevor, in a panic.

"I am seventy-five years old. People do not imagine evil of one so near the grave. The child is but seventeen or so. And I will legally adopt her, Edith, and settle upon her a fortune sufficient to keep her properly after I am gone. I wish I had her address."

"I shall have it next week when she brings home my work. I will then send it to you," said the widow, hoarsely.

"Thank you. I will go down now and see my lawyer about it. He must see the father and

arrange affairs legally. I will myself see Miss Rosse."

"You don't seem to anticipate a refusal."

"I do not. I saw that she liked me as I liked her. It was a mutual attraction, Edith, although I am so old and she is so young. I know I could win her daughterly love. I intend to make the effort, at any rate. Send me her address as soon as you receive it. I'll go down now to see Barker."

He arose, and the widow followed his example.

"Ah, by the way," said Lord St. Leonards, halting midway to the door. "I noticed your confusion, Edith, when I entered the room. And I knew its cause."

"Impossible!" breathed Lady Trevor.

"I expressed my disapprobation of that man Pulford when I was at Castle Cliff. He was the friend and companion of your dissolute husband, and you should not permit him to visit you. No wonder you were confused at having me find him so familiarly in your presence. You must close your doors upon him. I know faces. His is a bad one!"

"You do him injustice, my lord. He is my man of business—"

"Get rid of him, then. Some one asked me yesterday at my club if it were true that the fellow were your lover. Think of that. You may imagine how I resented the insinuation. After your mad folly in running away with Sir Albert Trevor, people suspect you capable of any amount of idiocy,

I imagine. Get rid of Pulford. I'll find you another man of business who won't presume on his place !"

"I can't discharge Pulford at present, grandfather, but I will do so before I marry Lord Glenham. Come and see me often. I am always delighted to see you !" and the widow bestowed an embrace and kiss upon the marquis, who received it as if it were distasteful.

"Good-morning, Edith. Don't forget Miss Rosse's address !" and the old lord formally took his leave.

Lady Trevor had scarcely resumed her seat when Mr. Pulford rejoined her.

"Did you hear what the marquis said ?" demanded the widow.

"Every word, including his complimentary mention of myself," replied Pulford, his florid face burning with his anger. "Proud as he is, he'll find that I shall be his grandson-in-law in spite of him ! That will be my revenge upon him, Edith. I thought your reply to him very good."

"He wants to adopt that girl !"

"Can he suspect ?"

"No. He is in his dotage. He has taken a fancy to her, but he cannot possibly have the most remote suspicion of the truth, else he would have killed me in his fury. He is awful in his rages. But what a complication ! Who could have foreseen that he would encounter her ? Do you know, Pulford, I feel as if I were fighting against invisible beings—as if I were struggling with fate itself in this matter.

Just see what has happened. The girl was hidden in the depths of the Black Forest, and Lord Glenham found her there and fell in love with her. Her guardian died and she came to England, and Lord St. Leonards encounters her strangely, and wants to adopt her. Do you believe in Providence?"

"I am tempted to do so now."

"And so am I. There is something in all this I can't understand. The girl has not decided to accept my proposition. Suppose she refuses?"

"Then we'll carry her off by force. We have gone too far to stop now."

"She hesitated because she believes me engaged to marry Lord Glenham, and she does not want my money, and she does want to avoid seeing him. I offered a handsome bait. I think the old servant will prove a prudent sort of person and advise her to accept the offer. She was brought up in the forest and I saw her eyes sparkle at the mention of the country. I think my pretty gudgeon will swallow my bait."

"I will have a yacht ready to-morrow for the trip. I can charter one easily enough. The other arrangements will also be made to-day!"

Lady Trevor's prophecy proved correct. Old Gretchen had a longing, even greater than that of her young mistress, for the country, and strenuously urged Cecil to accept Lady Trevor's offer.

"We shall never see Lord Glenham there," the

old woman urged. "Her ladyship's money is as good as any body's. Do consent, Miss Cecil."

"It is something to live for an entire winter in the house *he* will hereafter inhabit," thought the girl, drearily. "And the work I do will meet his eyes often and often in the years to come, and he will never know whose hands restored his tapestry. Yet she may tell him, and he will look on the work with tenderness, for her he once loved. I'll go."

"I'll leave a letter for Mr. Crafton," thought old Gretchen. "He can follow us if he likes. He'll have a better chance of winning Miss Cecil there."

And so it happened that Cecil, suspecting no deep-laid design against herself, feeling no misgiving, sent that very afternoon a letter to Lady Trevor accepting the situation offered her.

If she could have seen the evil joy of the pair over that letter she would have trembled.

"It's all right now," said Mr. Pulford. "Write to her to come here with her luggage and her servant in a cab at five o'clock to-morrow afternoon. She will come—she will go away again—and then she will disappear from the knowledge of all who have known her, and be beyond the search of the keenest detective in all England. It will be only another of the 'mysterious disappearances' that now and then are recorded in the newspapers. I am impatient for to-morrow! We shall sleep in safety to-morrow night! We shall then have never more any reason to fear 'Miss Rosse!'"



## CHAPTER XXI.

### EMBARKED.

Lady Trevor wrote a letter, which Mr. Pulford dictated, expressing to Miss Rosse her gratification at her acceptance of her ladyship's offer of employment, and requesting her to arrive at Lady Trevor's house in a cab, with her luggage and servant, upon the afternoon of the next day at five o'clock.

This letter was dispatched by a special messenger, Cecil's address having been given in her letter, and an answer was returned, saying that Miss Rosse would keep the appointment.

Mr. Pulford went assiduously to work to carry out the nefarious scheme he, with Lady Trevor's able assistance, had concocted.

While the unscrupulous pair were thus employed, Cecil Rosse summoned her landlady to an interview, and informed her of her purposed change of residence.

Mrs. Thomas' surprise was very great.

"It's a magnificent chance for you, Miss Rosse," she exclaimed. "A hundred pounds, and board and lodging for yourself and Gretchen thrown in, for a winter's work! Them rich nobility don't really know what to do with their money. A hundred pounds above all expenses for just sitting like a lady at your embroidery! I shall be sorry to lose you, Miss. A more quiet lodger, nor a truer lady, I never see. But it's for your good, so I won't say one word against your going."

"Your house seems a second home to me, Mrs. Thomas," said Cecil. "I do not like to leave it, yet I feel as if I ought to do the best I can for myself and Gretchen. I shall come back to you when my work for Lady Trevor is finished. I hope you will always have a room for us."

"I'll always make room for you, Miss Rosse," exclaimed the landlady, energetically. "You'll always be as welcome here as flowers in Spring."

Mrs. Thomas was presently summoned from the room.

"And now," said Cecil, "I will write a note to Madame Lange, to be sent to her to-morrow. She has been very kind to me, and I cannot leave her without a word."

She sat down at her little dispatch-box and wrote a graceful little letter to the fancy-work dealer, stating that Lady Trevor desired her to repair some valuable old tapestry-work at her ladyship's coun-

try-house, and that she had accepted the commission.

While Cecil was engaged with this note, old Gretchen, in her own bedroom, was laboriously composing a letter to Maldred Crafton, who would soon present himself again at Queen's Crescent, she well knew.

The letter was written in German, ill-spelled, and execrably penned. It stated that Miss Cecil was going to Lady Trevor's country-house in Yorkshire for the winter to prepare her ladyship's tapestry-hangings, and if Mr. Crafton would call upon Miss Cecil in that remote region she would undoubtedly be glad to see him.

"My young lady knows that Lady Trevor is the betrothed of Lord Glenham," the letter concluded, "but she will never see his lordship. She would have refused the engagement but for my persuasions, but I can see that she is pining on account of his treachery to her, and I know a winter in the country, with long walks and fine scenery, would be good for her. She grows paler and thinner every day. I am alarmed about her. So I have urged her to go to this great house in Yorkshire for a complete change. After a month or so I hope that she will be herself again. If it seem strange to you, sir, that she should go to the house of Lord Glenham's betrothed, blame me and not her."

And the letter concluded with protestations of the writer's good faith and sincere homage.

This letter Gretchen deposited in Mrs. Thomas keeping the next day, with directions that it should be delivered to Mr. Crafton upon the occasion of his next visit to the house.

The next day, also, Cecil dispatched her missive through the post to Madame Lange.

Then the task of packing was entered upon. Cecil's possessions numbered two trunks. Gretchen owned a portmanteau. One of the trunks contained Miss Rosse's small wardrobe; the other was filled with the choicest books that had belonged to the old pastor of Zorlitz, two or three pictures that had hung on the parsonage walls, and a few additional articles which derived their chief value from ancient associations. This trunk Cecil decided to leave in the care of Mrs. Thomas.

Dinner was served at three o'clock in the girl's sitting-room, and soon after four a cab was brought to the door, and Cecil and Gretchen took their departure from Queen's Crescent.

As the young girl looked back at the dingy brick dwelling, and at her landlady in the open doorway with a handkerchief at her eyes, her heart suddenly sank within her.

"I've a good mind not to go, after all," she exclaimed, impulsively.

"But it is too late to change your mind, Miss

Cecil," cried Gretchen, aghast. "What would Lady Trevor say? What would Madame Lange say? What would Mrs. Thomas say?"

"Yes, it is too late!" sighed Cecil. "I must go now. Yet such a strange fear came upon me at that moment, Gretchen, such an awful dread, as if I were going straight to my death!"

She looked at her old servant with wild and frightened eyes and a pallor like that of the dead.

"Nonsense, Miss Cecil," responded the old woman, shivering in spite of her air of rebuke and disbelief.

"The tea was too strong for you, that is what ails you."

Cecil shook her head and sank back upon her cushions.

"If it's a presentiment," said Gretchen, who was at heart superstitious and a believer in signs and omens, "it must be a warning against your going to Yorkshire by rail as you'd intended doing. There's lots of accidents by rail, more than by water. We had better go in her ladyship's yacht."

"I cannot understand this strange depression. I wish I had refused to go to Yorkshire. How foolish I am, Gretchen. This is all nonsense, as you say. I must conquer it."

The girl sat in silence throughout their drive to Lady Trevor's residence. When the cabman opened the door and the two alighted, Gretchen noticed that the hand of her young mistress was cold as ice,

"Are you going to be ill, Miss Cecil?" she whispered, anxiously.

"No. It's over now. I am myself again. We—I—must enter the house. Lady Trevor has some last instructions to give me."

Gretchen followed her young mistress up the steps and lifted the knocker. A footman in livery opened the door.

"Will you inform Lady Trevor that Miss Rosse is here?" said the young lady.

"Her ladyship said you were to be shown into the morning-room," replied the footman. "Her ladyship will see you directly."

He flung open the door of the morning-room, and Cecil and Gretchen passed in.

The room was unoccupied. The two were kept waiting for some minutes, when the sound of wheels caused Gretchen to approach the window.

"Our cab is gone, Miss Cecil!" she cried, in alarm. "Our luggage is stolen—"

She was about to rush to the door in a panic, when Mr. Pulford, suave and bland, made his appearance.

"Good-morning, Miss Rosse," he said, bowing courteously. "I have taken the liberty to pay and discharge your cabman, as he says his horse is too tired to carry you the further distance to Gravesend. The luggage is in the hall, and another cab has been sent for. Lady Trevor will be with you directly."

Cecil inclined her head gravely.

"I know nothing about Gravesend," she said, "Are we to go there?"

"It's a suburb where vessels lie," declared Mr. Pulford. "Lady Trevor's yacht is there. You will have a delightful sail in her, Miss Rosse. The weather is fine and you will have a quick trip to Yorkshire. It will be far pleasanter than by rail, and, as the yacht is obliged to go, the trip will cost you nothing."

"Lady Trevor is very kind and thoughtful," remarked Cecil. "I have never been on the water except when crossing the Channel, but I think I should enjoy the sail."

At this juncture Lady Trevor entered the room.

She looked somewhat worn and troubled, despite the rouge and pearl powder that artistically ornamented her countenance. Her eyes were haggard, and there were dark circles below them. An uneasy conscience and a deep and terrible anxiety lest her wicked plans should miscarry and render her wakeful during the night, and now tortured her beyond expression. She feared, too, lest Lord St. Leonards or the Earl of Glenham might visit her unexpectedly while Cecil was in her house. The feeling that she was fighting fate was strong upon her. She was playing a bold game, and its issue seemed to her just now more than doubtful—so many were her guilty fears.

"You are punctual, I see, Miss Rosse," she

exclaimed. "I like that. I will not detain you long, as you are to go to Gravesend. By the way, have you informed your friends of your engagement with me?"

"I have not many friends, madam," replied Cecil. "I told my landlady, and I wrote to Madame Lange, who has been kind to me, that I should spend the winter in working embroidery at your ladyship's country-house in Yorkshire."

Lady Trevor pulled at her bracelets nervously. Mr. Pulford's florid face darkened.

"That was quite right and proper," said the widow, after a minute's silence. "Did you tell them by what route you intended going?"

"No, madam. In truth, I had decided to go by rail rather than by boat," said Cecil, frankly, "so of course I did not mention the yacht."

Lady Trevor and her ally looked relieved.

"Of course," said the widow, "you must suit yourself, Miss Rosse. If you prefer to go by rail, do not hesitate to say so. But the house is several miles from any station and there would be no one to meet you, while if you go in the yacht, which is obliged to make the voyage, you save yourself expense and fatigue, have a far pleasanter journey, and will be met at the landing. I sent a letter to my old housekeeper yesterday to send a carriage to the harbor to meet you."

"It's a pity we had not known earlier of Miss Rosse's change of mind," said Mr. Pulford, consult-

ing his watch, and speaking in a manner that was apparently sincere. "The night-train for Yorkshire is gone. If you decide not to go in the yacht, Miss Rosse, you will be obliged to wait until morning."

"The yacht is most comfortable," remarked Lady Trevor. "Every arrangement has been made for the comfort of ladies. I have recently made a voyage in it myself. By the way, the yarns, and wools, canvas and needles have been sent on board, have they not, Mr. Pulford?"

Her ladyship's confederate assented.

"As you have decided not to go in the yacht, Miss Rosse," said the widow, pleasantly, with no outward sign of the discomfiture she secretly felt, "Mr. Pulford may as well telegraph to the sailing-master not to wait longer."

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Cecil, "if I have seemed hesitating and undecided. I am not used to the water, but no doubt I shall like sailing. I do not wish to return to my lodgings for the night, as I have given them up, and I will therefore accept with pleasure your kind offer of conveyance on your yacht."

"There is the cab I ordered at the door," exclaimed Mr. Pulford.

"Then I will not detain you longer, Miss Rosse," said Lady Trevor, graciously. "I am delighted in having secured the services of such an artist as you are in the restoration of my valuable tapestry."

Take your time to the work. I shall not visit my country house this winter, and when your task is done, if you will write to Mr. Pulford, my agent, he will send you the amount agreed upon, one hundred pounds. I wish you a pleasant voyage and a happy stay at my dear old Yorkshire home !”

Cecil acknowledged the expression of apparent kindness, and after a few final questions, took her leave.

Mr. Pulford accompanied her to the cab-door. The luggage was already placed upon it. He helped her into the cab, handed in Gretchen, and gave his order to the driver in a low voice.

The cab rolled away and he re-entered the house.

The footman was looking out after the vehicle. Mr. Pulford paused a moment to speak to him.

“You picked up a chance cab, I suppose, James ?” he asked.

“Yes, sir, one that had just set down a fare.”

“The young lady has entered her ladyship’s service,” remarked Mr. Pulford. “She is to catch the limited mail for Yorkshire, and if the horse is not blown they’ll make the train in time. The young lady and her old foreign servant are as ignorant as a pair of geese of English ways. I hope they won’t come to grief on the way to Yorkshire—to her ladyship’s country seat.”

He passed on into the morning-room. Lady Trevor had been watching from the window. She came forward now to meet him.



CECIL TAKEN ABOARD THE YACHT.—See Page 259.



"All right so far, Edith," said Mr. Pulford, airily. "The plot works to perfection."

"You are sure it will continue to do so?"

"Perfectly sure. I must catch a stray hansom and whirl down to Gravesend after them to see them aboard and safely embarked. And then to catch the train for my journey. Have no more fears, Edith. Trust me, and all will come out right. Our tracks are covered. I defy any one to uncover them."

He seized his hat and hurried from the house.

Turning the nearest corner, he came upon an empty hansom cab. He hailed and engaged it, and went swiftly on his way to Gravesend.

Arrived at his destination, he had no difficulty in discovering the yacht he had chartered as it lay in the stream. He hired a row boat and went out to it.

It proved to be a small, well-built vessel, snug and neat and trim, a gentleman's pleasure craft. The deck was scoured to whiteness. There was a small saloon prettily fitted up, with carpet, table, and divan, and off the saloon were four state-rooms, small, but bright, clean and pleasant.

"These quarters will strike Miss Rosse as sumptuous," thought Mr. Pulford. "I had to pay a good price for it, but then I did my business under an assumed name with the sailing master, and it's all safe—safe as the dead."

One of the state-rooms had been newly cleansed and prepared for the occupancy of Cecil and her servant. After examining this with considerable

interest, Mr. Pulford re-entered the saloon. A stewardess had just made her appearance, and he entered into conversation with her. She was a Portuguese woman whom he himself had hired for the occasion—a dark-browed, heavy-featured person, with something repulsive about her ill-cut mouth, and small, sleepy-looking eyes. He had known her a long time, and was quite well aware that her looks did not belie her disposition, and that she was capable of committing a crime even, if she were well paid for it.

“They will soon be here, Maria,” exclaimed Mr. Pulford, placing a little bag of coin in her hands. “There is the beginning of your pay. Be faithful to me, carry out my instructions, and you shall have the reward I promised you.”

“I’ll earn it !” declared Maria, grimly. “Everything is ready. We’ll be off as soon as they come !”

“Remember,” whispered Pulford, impressively, “that on proofs of the girl’s death the reward shall be doubled !”

“I’ll remember !” replied the woman, significantly. “I shall claim the whole sum, and that soon !”

Mr. Pulford, well satisfied, returned to the deck, and presently was rowed ashore.

He had scarcely landed when the vehicle with Cecil and her servant arrived. It was now growing dusk, with indications of rain. Both Cecil and Gretchen were well muffled.

“I came down to see you off, Miss Rosse”

explained Pulford, marking Cecil's surprise, after he had dismissed her cab. "Lady Trevor was so anxious for your comfort that she insisted upon my coming. The wind has changed within an hour, and it is commencing to rain, but you'll have smooth water and a pleasant voyage. Let me take you out to the yacht."

The luggage had already been deposited in the row-boat. Pulford helped Cecil in, Gretchen clambered after, and himself followed, and they were rowed out to the yacht. He led the girl below to the saloon.

"This is the stewardess, Miss Rosse," he said, indicating by a wave of the hand the Portuguese woman, who stood surveying the new-comers curiously. "You'll find her faithful to her duties and very attentive. There is a good cook on board, and you can imagine yourself 'monarch of all you survey,' if you choose. Here is your state-room. The lower berth is yours ; the upper one is intended for your maid."

"It is all very nice," said Cecil. "Lady Trevor has been very considerate of my comfort."

"Yes, and she hopes you will throw off all care and give yourself up to the enjoyment of the voyage. The wind having changed, you may be longer on the way, but the passage will be pleasant. You hear the trampling of feet on deck? They are hauling up the anchor. I must go ashore. Good-bye, Miss Rosse."

He held out his hand. Cecil placed hers in it, and he then, with a last word of encouragement, ascended to the deck. The row-boat was in waiting. He exchanged a last word with the captain and went ashore.

The sails were unfurled and the yacht moved down the stream.

"Lady Trevor has been most kind, Miss Cecil," said Gretchen, admiring the furnishing of state-room and saloon. "This is her own yacht. She treats you as an honored friend. She was quick to see that you are a real lady."

"The whole thing seems to me like a dream," said Cecil. "I can scarcely believe that I be I, as the old woman says in the nursery rhyme. I wonder at my own boldness in daring to leave London and to undertake such a mission as this."

"'Nothing venture, nothing have,'" said Gretchen, wisely. "It would have taken you many years to lay up a hundred pounds clear of all expenses if you had staid in London, but here you get it in a single winter. We are very fortunate, Miss Cecil."

"Very fortunate indeed, Gretchen. And yet I don't like to work for Lady Trevor nor to take her money, since she is to marry Lord Glenham. I suppose I am foolish," and Cecil tried to smile.

"We are off," said the Portuguese stewardess, drawing nearer, as the yacht gave a lurch and a bound. "I will prepare your supper, miss. Any orders you may give will be obeyed."

"We will go on deck for a few moments," replied Miss Rosse. "I have no orders to give. Get anything you please."

She went up to the deck with Gretchen. The shadows were thickening, and so was the rain. And with the gloom of nature came back that strange and unaccountable depression she had experienced before, that terrible gloom that weighed upon her like a hideous black pall.

"Something is going to happen to me!" she exclaimed. "Gretchen, I feel so strangely depressed. I almost wish we had not come!"

Yet, despising herself for what she deemed her weakness, she made no movement towards return. And the yacht glided on under sail, and swept out towards the open sea and the darkness of the night.

Mr. Pulford, standing on the shore, watched the vessel out of sight. Then his florid visage reddened with a glow of wicked jubilation.

"So she goes out of Edith's life forever!" he muttered. "Every track is carefully covered. No one will ever trace her to her doom! The thing has been well managed. We have nothing more to fear—nothing. The great danger that beset us so suddenly has been conquered as promptly. The girl is got rid of—we are safe!"



## CHAPTER XXII.

### SUSPICIONS OF FOUL PLAY.

It was nearly two weeks after the departure of Cecil Rosse and her old servant from London that Maldred Crafton again visited Number Four, Queen's Crescent, Bayswater. He had delayed his visit, desiring to give Cecil ample time to recover from the crushing blow he had dealt her through the lying paragraph he had caused to be inserted in the *Court Journal*. During the several weeks that had elapsed since her receipt of that notice of Lord Glenham's engagement of marriage to Lady Trevor, the girl had had time to become resigned to her apparent fate. He knew so well her brave and resolute nature, her strong, earnest, noble soul, that he felt confident she would not weakly yield to her sorrow, or supinely sink under her despair. He believed that he would find her calm and self-possessed, holding her grief in firm check, and devoting herself to her daily duties with quiet cheerfulness.

He had determined to present himself to her as

her suitor. Now, if ever, his love would be appreciated by her in her loneliness. He would approach the matter delicately ; he did not intend to ask her love at the outset. He would only beg to be allowed to devote himself to her happiness, to shield her from all trouble, to watch over her and care for her.

“ I’ll be so delicate that she will consider me her best friend, and a safe refuge from all her troubles,” he thought, as he mounted the steps of the lodging-house and rung the bell. “ Yes, I’ll venture to-day to ask her to become my wife. Old Gretchen must have prepared the way for me. I’ll lose no further time !”

The housemaid opened the door. Mr. Crafton passed her, entering the hall.

“ Take my card up to Miss Rosse,” he said, producing the bit of pasteboard.

“ Miss Rosse ? She isn’t here, sir. She’s gone, sir,” replied the maid.

“ Gone !” repeated Crafton, blankly. “ Where is she gone ?”

“ That I don’t know, sir. She’s been gone these two weeks. She’s gone for good, sir.”

Crafton recoiled a step or two in his amazement. The statement seemed to him incredible. Cecil gone, when she had but so recently come to London ! Had she returned to Zorlitz ?

“ Tell your mistress that Mr. Crafton would like

to see her a moment," he said. "I am a friend of Miss Rosse, please mention."

"The gentleman as was here afore, sir? yes, sir. Just step into the parlor, sir, and I will call the missus."

Crafton was ushered into the little parlor, and the housemaid hurried away in quest of her mistress.

The visitor had time to study the vases of wax flowers and fruits under their glass covers, the two or three quaint, old-fashioned family portraits, and all the objects of interest or curiosity the room afforded, and to grow heartily tired and impatient before Mrs. Thomas appeared.

But she came in at last, freshly arrayed in a purple silk gown, with her broad, good-natured face shining redly under the shadow of her white lace cap, and with a letter in her hand. She courtesied to the visitor, who demanded at once Miss Rosse's present address.

"That I can't give you, sir," replied Mrs. Thomas, "She is somewhere in Yorkshire, at a great country house—"

Crafton repeated the words in bewilderment.

"Gretchen, Miss Rosse's servant, left a letter for you, which here it is," remarked Mrs. Thomas, extending it. "Miss Rosse herself offered quite of her own free will—for I should never have been bold enough to ask such a thing of a born lady as she is—to write me a letter from her new home, but

she has not done so. I expected that Gretchen, at least, might drop me a line, although her English is so imperfect, but not a line from any one have I received. I know my place as well as any one, sir, nor do I wish to presume upon it ; but Miss Rosse is so young and beautiful, a stranger in a strange land, innocent of the world, and unknowing of the wiles of the wicked, and I should feel safer if I could know as she made the journey safely to Yorkshire. I am that uneasy at times that I am sorry she ever went, although a hundred pounds is a great sum, and not to be picked off every bush."

Crafton tore open his letter and eagerly perused its contents.

"Why, is it possible?" he ejaculated. "Miss Rosse is gone to Lady Trevor's house! To Lady Trevor's, of all places in the world. What under heaven does it mean?"

He was absolutely staggered at the revelation.

Mrs. Thomas was obliged to tell the story of Cecil's engagement, to corroborate Gretchen's letter.

"It's an absolute puzzle!" exclaimed Crafton. "She has gone to Lady Trevor's house—they two have met! Are they friends?"

He wondered how Lady Trevor and Cecil Rosse had chanced to meet. Mrs. Thomas explained that seeming mystery. Then, in his own soul, he wondered if Lady Trevor knew her beautiful embroid-

eress to be the girl Lord Glenham had known and loved in Zorlitz.

"Impossible!" he thought. "She does not suspect the truth. I'll enlighten her—she wouldn't keep her under her roof over night if she knew her to be her hated rival!"

He extracted all the information possible from Mrs. Thomas, and then took his leave, re-entering his hansom cab, and driving straight to Lady Trevor's town residence.

The footman declared her ladyship to be at home.

He sent in his card, was admitted, and ushered into the drawing-room.

Lady Trevor, in an elegant morning costume, sat in a low chair before the hearth. A book lay open on her knee, and she held a feather screen in her hand. She arose to receive him, and he noticed that she was looking ill, that her hard, black eyes were heavy, and that her face, in spite of cosmetics, was wan and haggard.

"I am fortunate to find you in town, Lady Trevor," he exclaimed. "I wonder that you are not in the country, however, with all the rest of the fashionable world."

"Except yourself. I leave town to-morrow for St. Leonards, on a visit. And afterward I shall visit Glenham Manor, the earl's seat. Lord Glenham with his mother are at this moment, I suppose, in Germany."

"They are gone to Zorlitz. Yes, I knew it. Is Lord St. Leonards in town?"

"No, he is at St. Leonards, his own place. He went up nearly a fortnight since, having premonitory symptoms of another attack of his old enemy, the gout. He has written to ask me to visit him, and of course I must go. This is the first invitation to his house he has given me since I married Sir Albert Trevor, fifteen years ago."

"He has received you fully into his favor again then? I am glad to hear it, Lady Trevor, and congratulate you."

"Oh, I am not in full favor, Mr. Crafton. Don't think that. You know as well as I do that the marquis is a crochety, passionate, stormy old man. I expect to be a martyr during my visit to him, as I have never won my way into his favor; but then, I am his granddaughter, and have certain rights that even he cannot set aside."

"We shall meet at Glenham Manor, I hope. I am to be there, too," said Crafton. "By the way what is the name of your own place in Yorkshire Lady Trevor?"

"Greycourt. I bought it myself. It is not fifty miles distant from Glenham Manor."

"I came to-day to see you on business, Lady Trevor," said Crafton, a little embarrassed, yet determined to come to the point. "I wish to inquire about a certain Miss Rosse whom you have taken into your employment."

Lady Trevor started, turning livid under her cosmetics, as could be plainly seen.

"Miss Rosse !" she stammered.

"Of Number Four, Queen's Crescent, Bayswater. I suppose she is now at Greycourt, your place in Yorkshire. Do you know who this embroideress really is ?"

"How should I know ?"

"She is Cecil Rosse, of Zorlitz ! I went to Germany while Lord Glenham was in Scotland, and found that her uncle was dead, and that she had come to London. The very day after my arrival in London I came upon her in the street. A most singular occurrence, was it not ?"

"Singular, indeed !"

"I obtained her address and visited her. She is no fit match for Lord Glenham, but I do not need to ask for rank and fortune with my wife, and I too am her suitor. It was a singular coincidence that threw her in your way, Lady Trevor."

"Marvelous !" breathed Lady Trevor.

"I may seem disloyal to the earl in becoming a suitor of the lady he also loves," said Crafton, "but I can easily reconcile my course with my conscience. I know I can count upon your secrecy as far as I am concerned, for you would not wish to betray Miss Rosse's address to him now that you have discovered her identity with your sewing girl."

"You are quite safe with me. I shall not betray you," said Lady Trevor, huskily.

"I knew you would not," and Crafton smiled sardonically. "I beg you now to give me the exact address of Greycourt. I shall take the next train for Yorkshire."

Lady Trevor moved back in her chair and put her hand screen before her face. Her lips were bloodless, her eyes full of swift and lurking terror.

"To Yorkshire!" she said, in an odd, strained voice. "To see Miss Rosse? She is there, I suppose. I told her to write me on her arrival, but I have not heard from her. I hope she went safely. She didn't seem to know much about English ways."

"Mrs. Thomas, her landlady, seems alarmed because she has not written to her. But, undoubtedly, she is at Greycourt, and hard at work. I shall know to-morrow."

"Are you sure that she will be glad to see you?"

"I think she will be. I am going to ask her to marry me, Lady Trevor. I can afford to gratify my fancy for a beautiful face. I wonder that you never suspected her identity."

"How could I? The English name of Ross is common enough, and her name is similarly pronounced. She is certainly beautiful. I hope that you will win her. I have taken an interest in her, not knowing who she really is, but, of course, if she is the girl Lord Glenham loves, I do not care to keep her in my employment. I hope you will marry her directly, Mr. Crafton, before Lord Glenham returns."

She tried to speak playfully, but the effort was a failure.

"Poor soul!" thought Crafton. "She thinks it's all up with her chances, now that Glenham is gone to look for Miss Rosse. She thinks that Lady Glenham has given in to her son's entreaties, and that her day is over. That is the secret of her looking so ill. She'd be happy enough if I should succeed in winning Cecil for myself."

Having obtained the exact address he desired, he made his adieux.

He took the night-train for Yorkshire. On the afternoon of the next day he drove up the shaded avenue of Greycourt, and was admitted into the house by an old woman who was placed in charge of it.

"I wish to see Miss Rosse," he explained.

"Miss Rosse is not here!" was the startling response. "My lady wrote over two weeks ago that a sewing-girl named Miss Rosse would arrive by the railway-train, but although we sent to meet her, she never came."

"What! she is not here?"

"No, sir. We concluded as she'd changed her mind, it being so lonely like here."

"Not here! Why, Lady Trevor told me she was here!"

"Belike, sir. But I haven't written to my lady, so how could she know, unless the young woman told her of her change of mind?"

The housekeeper was old and respectable. Her word could not be doubted. Cecil was not at Grey-court and had not been there. Crafton felt a sense of shuddering apprehension—a sickening terror. The girl and her servant had most unaccountably disappeared. But where could they be? “Something has happened to them!” he exclaimed. “She was remarkably beautiful—there has been foul play. But I’ll find her if I have to dig up all England. By heaven, if any one has harmed her, I’ll find him out and hunt him to his death!”



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### AN UNAVAILING SEARCH.

Maldred Crafton, seized with the most serious alarm at the mysterious disappearance of Cecil Rosse and her maid, and filled with excitement, engaged at once in an eager search for them. He declared that he should not eat nor sleep until the mystery was solved. He felt instinctively that there had been foul play in regard to them, that Cecil was not hiding herself—that some great harm had happened to her.

“Her beauty has brought some awful peril upon her,” he exclaimed, the sweat starting upon his forehead in great beads. “She is a stranger in England. Brought up in a secluded forest-hamlet, among simple, honest peasants, she is as unsuspecting and trusting as a baby! And her servant is a credulous old creature, who believes people mean all they say. They would easily have fallen into a trap. She is like a lamb among wolves. Great Heavens! Have the wolves found her and seized upon her? Has

some one seen her, admired her, and ensnared her as one would a bird? But this is madness. In these days, people do not do such things. Yet where is she?"

His agony was unmistakably real and terrible.

He loved Cecil Rosse with all the strength of his bold, strong, selfish nature. He had schemed and toiled to win her. To lose her now, so strangely and mysteriously, was more than he could bear. Perhaps she was at that very moment in some great trouble—perhaps she was in peril of her life. Perhaps she was dead. He grew faint, and sick, and giddy, with the awful supposition, and leaned heavily against the door-post, his swarthy face growing suddenly white.

"Won't you come in, sir?" asked the old housekeeper, full of concern.

"No. If she is not here, why should I waste time by lingering?" exclaimed Crafton. "I must go back to London by the first train. I will make inquiries on the route. I will search for her in town. It is two entire weeks since she disappeared. Two whole weeks! What may not have happened in that time?"

He questioned the housekeeper further. She was a simple, honest countrywoman, incapable of guile. It was very clear that she had received a letter from Lady Trevor, bidding her send to the railway station on a certain day to meet Miss Rosse, who had been engaged to do certain repairs upon valuable tapestry-work. In fact, on being urged, the

old housekeeper produced the letter, and Crafton read it. Nothing could appear more clear and straightforward than the contents of this epistle. The train upon which Miss Rosse might be expected to arrive at the station was specified. Lady Trevor enjoined the housekeeper to treat Miss Rosse with respect and attention, and to pay particular regard for the girl's comfort.

"And I'm sure I did everything I could do," said the old woman. "We've no horses here now, sir, and I sent the farmer over with his spring-cart, the best carriage at my command. And I prepared a hot supper for her, but she did not come. I should have written to my lady, only I thought she must know from Miss Rosse herself that Miss Rosse had not come."

"You had better write to Lady Trevor. She thinks Miss Rosse here. By the way," added Crafton, with sudden suspicion, "is there any old tapestry in the house?"

"Certainly, sir. The walls of the Tapestry-room are covered with hangings all done by hand that are five hundred years old. People often come to see them. Will you go up, sir?"

"No, oh, no," replied Crafton, ashamed of his suspicion and question. "Of course not. I merely asked the question through absent-mindedness."

He dropped a coin in her hand, mounted into the waiting fly, and ordered the driver to return to the railway station seven miles distant.

The drive was performed briskly. Crafton was too excited and anxious to remain silent, and asked questions with feverish rapidity, but no light could be obtained upon the mystery that occupied him.

They entered the little village of Masham and drove directly to the railway station. Here Crafton made eager inquiries of guards, porters, and various other officials. Even under the stimulus of the coins he liberally bestowed, no one could remember a young lady from London, accompanied by a German servant, at the time Crafton mentioned—nor, indeed, at any other time. Crafton repeated his description of Cecil until he was weary, but no one had seen her, and he was forced, at last, to believe that she had never even arrived at Masham.

“She might have made a mistake and alighted at the wrong station,” he said to himself. “But if she had, how would that account for two weeks’ absence and silence? I’ll go over the ground carefully and inquire at every station, however.”

He took the first train for London. Putting his resolve into practice, he inquired at every station on the route at which the mail-train—the one he believed Cecil to have taken—stopped, but obtained no clew to those whom he sought.

Upon arriving in town at a late hour that night, he proceeded to his hotel, where he tossed for several hours on his bed, sleepless and excited. He arose early, haggard and worn, and after a hasty toilet and breakfast he resumed his search.

"I'll begin at the other end of the snarl," he said to himself. "I'll trace her from the moment of leaving Bayswater."

He drove to Queen's Crescent, Number Four. Early as was the hour Mrs. Thomas was up, and came without delay into the little parlor into which he had been shown.

"Mr. Crafton!" she exclaimed. "Why, how you do look, sir! Are you ill?"

"No, no," replied Crafton, impatiently. "Have you heard from Miss Rosse since I was here?"

"Why, no, sir. It's only a day or two since—"

"I went to Lady Trevor," interrupted Crafton, beginning to walk the floor restlessly, "and she had not heard from Miss Rosse, but supposed her to be in Yorkshire. I went to Yorkshire—"

"Since the day before yesterday? Why, you have rushed straight through, sir. And how is Miss Rosse, bless her sweet face?"

"She is not there!" ejaculated Crafton, hoarsely.

"Not there?" repeated Mrs. Thomas, stupidly.

"She has not been there. She has disappeared. She is lost somewhere on her way from Bayswater to Greycourt."

"Lost? That innocent young girl! Disappeared? Why, something's happened to her, Mr. Crafton. Some harm has come to her!" cried Mrs. Thomas, wringing her hands.

"Who procured the cab in which she left your house, madam?"

“Sukey, the maid, sir. I sent her out to the nearest cab-stand, and she fetched it.”

“I may be able to trace Miss Rosse to the railway station through the cabman,” said Crafton. “Let Sukey come with me to the stand. If the man is there she can point him out to me, and I’ll question him. If he is not there I will return again and again until I find him.”

Mrs. Thomas went out into her narrow entry and called loudly for Sukey. The maid came hurrying up the area stairs. To state the service required of her occupied but a moment, and Sukey hurried away for her hat. She returned almost immediately, and Crafton followed her into the street and to the nearest cab-stand.

“There’s the cabby now, sir,” exclaimed the girl, pointing out a stupid-looking man who was in the act of removing a nose-bag from the head of his horse. “The very one, as I’ll swear to, sir, afore the Lord Mayor, if it’s necessary. He took the poor young lady from our house, as he won’t dare to deny, sir, not to my face.”

Crafton approached the man and opened a conversation by producing a half-crown which he displayed alluringly between his fingers.

“My good fellow,” he exclaimed, “I want you to refresh your memory and answer me a few questions. Do you remember taking a young lady and her servant, about two weeks ago, from Number Four, Queen’s Crescent?”

"Don't you go for to deny it!" interrupted Sukey, severely, fixing her gaze upon the cabman. "I'll swear you did, and it was I that fetched you. The truth, young man!"

"I ain't going for to deny it!" declared the cabman, indignantly. "Why should I deny it? You comes for me at the time you specifies and I goes. What of it? I did take the young lady, and a rare pretty un she was too, and her old furrin servant along of her. What of that?" and he glared at his interlocutors, not softened by the glitter of the half-crown.

"To what place did you convey the young lady?" asked Crafton.

"Yes," cried Sukey, judicially, "that's the question. Where did you take her? The truth, young man, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!"

"I ain't going to lie, not for no arf-crown," said the cabman, sulkily. "I took the young lady to the place she ordered. There's where I took her!"

"And that place?" demanded Crafton. "Be still, my good girl. You do not need to interfere. Here's five shillings for you, my fine fellow. And now tell me where you took the young lady. To the railway station?"

"No, sir, to South Audley street, to a great house there, as belongs to a rich barrownight's widow, Lady Trevor."

"Oh, you did?" said Crafton, dropping half the

sum of money into the man's hand. "And after South Audley street, where did you take her?"

"No'ers. I left her there."

"Left her there at Lady Trevor's?"

"Jes' so, sir. You see, sir, the young lady asked me to take her to South Audley street. It was nigh six o'clock, and the horse was tired and hungry. If I'd knowed as she wanted a longer turn I'd a give the chance to some other cabby, bein' as I'd had nothing to eat for hours, except one or two glasses of beer to stay my stomach. So when the young lady gets out in South Audley street and goes into the house, I waits a bit and then takes down her luggage."

"Well?"

"Just then a gentleman comes out of the house, a fellow with a sandy beard and eye-glasses stuck on his nose—"

"Mr. Pulford! Yes, I know."

"And he asks me if I can drive the young lady to the Northern Railway station. And I says as I'm beat and the horse is beat. I allow as I could have been prevailed on to go, for a cab-horse will always stand a few miles more, but the gentleman says, 'All right,' says he, and he pays me up liberal and something extra for beer, and so I goes."

"And you did not take the young lady away from South Audley street?"

"No, I didn't."

"And you haven't seen her since she entered that house?"

"I didn't say that, sir."

"You have seen her since? Where? Here's another crown. Where have you seen her since?" demanded Crafton, eagerly.

"Well, you see, sir, I thought as I might pick up a fare on my way home, so I sort of loitered along, stopping frequent," said the cabman, reflectively. "And I was looking around for a fare. It was fifteen minutes after I left South Audley street, and I hadn't got far, as I'd slipped into a by-place and took another beer, when a cab goes past me with that there identical luggage on top as I'd left at South Audley street, and I'd swear to the pork-mantle and the trunk, both being foreign-looking and uncommon-like. And I catches a glimpse for jest one instant, but long enough to swear to 'em, of the young lady inside and her old servant. They were alone in there and on their way to the railway-station."

"Proof that she left Lady Trevor's house," thought Crafton. "That is all you can tell me?" he said, aloud.

"All, sir. What's the row? Is the young lady missing?"

"That she is!" cried Sukey, putting her apron to her eyes. "And a sweeter nor more beautiful young lady never lived. So sweet-spoken as she was, too, and so gentle and kind, a real lady, as I

knows 'em, and can't be deceived in 'em. Maybe she's been burked, oh, my poor young lady. And old Gretchen, too. If I was the p'leece I'd tear down every house in London but I'd find her."

"Come, Sukey," said Crafton. "You're drawing a crowd. Home with you, girl, to your mistress. Tell her of my discovery, and say that if I find Miss Rosse I shall bring her back to her old lodgings. Off with you."

He tossed her a shilling, watched her scamper homewards, and then engaged a fresh cab, and drove to South Audley street.

Lady Trevor was at home. He sent up his card, and paused a few moments to interrogate the footman.

"See here, my good fellow," he exclaimed, producing a half sovereign, money being the "open sesame" to the heart of the lower-class Briton, "I want to ask you a few questions. Do you remember a young lady who came here over two weeks ago with an old German servant? The young lady was Miss Rosse, an embroideress—"

"I remember, sir."

"Do you know where she is?"

"At Greycourt, sir. My lady sent her there to do some work."

"She came in one cab and went away in another, did she not?"

"Yes, sir. The first cabby did not want to go fur-

ther, so I ran out and fetched a cab to take her to the railway station."

"You did. Very good. Where did you find the cab? At the stand?"

"No, sir. I picked it up as it was passing."

"Confusion! Did you take the number?"

"No, sir. I never thought of the number."

"Then it's impossible to trace the cab. A chance vehicle which can never be found if I hunt years for it."

"You might advertise, sir."

"So I might, but suppose I don't want to advertise? I don't like to spread my private affairs abroad to all England. You saw Miss Rosse go away in the second cab?"

"I did, sir."

"Who gave the order to the cabman?"

"Mr. Pulford, sir. He went down to the cab and helped the young lady in. And he gave the order to the station—"

"You heard him?"

"Of course I did, sir," replied the man, honestly enough, Pulford's remark to him after the departure of the vehicle having lingered in his confused memory. "I heard him distinct, sir. 'To the railway station at Euston Square.' Them's the words, sir."

Crafton dropped the coin into the man's hand.

"It is proved that Miss Rosse came to this house on the day she left Bayswater," he thought, "and

it is doubly proved that she quitted it. I don't know what strange and intangible suspicion was in my mind. Lady Trevor did not know that this Miss Rosse was Glenham's betrothed wife, so of course she could not have wreaked any jealousy upon her. Bah ! What an idea ! As if the handsome woman of society were a Borgia or a Brinvilliers ! She would have done the girl no harm if she had known her identity. Of course not. And yet I think the black-eyed widow is capable of bold deeds of—let me say unscrupulousness—that would amaze her admiring world."

A second footman, he who had taken up the card, returned with the announcement that Lady Trevor would see her visitor.

Crafton followed the man up-stairs and was ushered into the drawing-room, his name being announced as he passed in.

Lady Trevor was alone. She gave one swift glance at Crafton's troubled visage as he entered, and came forward to meet him, smiling.

She looked better in health than when he had last seen her, only two days before. Her eyes were no longer haggard, her complexion no longer livid. She looked as if a great load of apprehension had been removed from her, as if her terrors had given place to a sense of security.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Lady Trevor," said Crafton, advancing towards her. "I am come again on business—"

"A little later and you would have missed seeing me," said Lady Trevor. "I am going to St. Leonards to-day."

"The marquis is not ill, I hope?"

"He has premonitions of gout still, and is obliged to keep very quiet. He has sent for me repeatedly, and last evening I received a very peremptory message, commanding me to come to St. Leonards to-day. Possibly he intends making his will in my favor. I have reason to expect it."

"And that expectation makes you look very happy. With all your wealth, what need have you of further stores? 'To him that hath shall be given.' It's the way of the world. Now, it's safe to say that nobody will ever send me a peremptory message to come and visit him while he makes a will in *my* favor!"

"'It's better to be born lucky than rich,'" said Lady Trevor, smiling. "I am one of the fortunate ones, Mr. Crafton."

"Indeed you are. The magnificent fortune you inherited through so narrow a chance from your step-mother, by the death of her little child, proves that," replied Crafton. "But I did not come to discuss your brilliant prospects, but my own affairs."

"Well, you have told your love to Miss Rosse, and have been accepted? Is that it? And you desire me to relinquish my claims upon Miss Rosse's time and release her from her engagement?" asked the

widow, with an appearance of friendly interest.

"You may count upon my good offices—"

"I have no such statement to make. Lady Trevor, Miss Rosse has not been to Greycourt."

"Not been to Greycourt!"

"She has disappeared. I can find no trace of her anywhere. I have seen her landlady again this morning and the cabman who brought her here, but I can get no clue to the mystery."

"This is most singular."

"I came back to you with the hope that since my previous visit you might have heard from Miss Rosse."

"But I have not done so. I supposed her at Greycourt. Something must have happened to her. Can she have lost her way and become stranded in some strange town? Can she, through some sudden impulse, have gone back to Zorlitz?"

"I never thought of that."

"It is possible. Lord Glenham is expected home in a day or two, and will come to St. Leonards. I think if he has found the girl—to think of her being his Cecil Rosse and I never to suspect the truth—that she will be with him and his mother. If you set out for Zorlitz to-night you will meet the earl in Paris."

"I don't want to meet him. I shall have to account to him for my treachery in going back to Zorlitz after we left the village together," said Crafton, gloomily. "I will wait in London until he

arrives. Then I will see him and discover what he has heard, and excuse myself as I am best able."

"The earl is too much attached to you to remain unforgiving, and you are much too clever not to be able to represent matters in a light to take all blame from yourself," said Lady Trevor.

Crafton made a movement toward the door.

"I will continue my researches until Glenham comes," he exclaimed. "I cannot think that Miss Rosse would return to Germany when she was doing well here. What can she do in that dead-alive, little peasant-hamlet?"

"She may have heard that Lord Glenham has gone there. One cannot make a move now-a-days but it is chronicled in the newspapers."

The idea had an element of plausibility, or rather possibility, in it that arrested Crafton's attention in spite of its baselessness.

He promised to consider it, and took his leave.

Upon the grand staircase he encountered Mr. Pulford face to face.

Pulford was freshly attired, but looked travel-worn. He had just returned from a two weeks' absence, his destination being a secret between him and Lady Trevor.

Crafton, knowing nothing of his recent absence, stopped to interrogate him upon the subject that filled his thoughts; but Mr. Pulford's statement was simply a corroboration of what he had already

heard. Crafton descended the stairs, and Pulford went on to the drawing-room.

Lady Trevor sprang forward to meet him.

"I am glad to see you back again," she exclaimed. "You met Mr. Crafton on the stair?"

"Yes. He will have hard work to find Miss Rosse," said Pulford, jubilantly. "She is disposed of, Edith. I defy Crafton and Lord Glenham and all the world to find her. And now you must set our wedding-day. When is it to be?"



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### AT ST. LEONARDS.

St. Leonards, in Sussex, was a magnificent estate, comprising a thousand acres, laid out in farms, all in the highest state of tillage, in pastures and meadows, park and woodland. The house was a great, massive, gray stone pile, of composite styles of architecture, forming a princely dwelling. It was approached by a wide and stately avenue a mile or more in length, bordered with great rows of elm trees, and was set in the midst of the park, with its stretches of velvet sward, its clumps of trees, its red and fallow deer, and its ornamental lake in full view of the drawing-room windows—as fair a landscape as ever greeted human eyes.

Lord St. Leonards had come down to his country-place immediately after his interview with Lady Trevor at her town-house, which we have recorded. He had visited his lawyer, according to his declared intention, and had enjoined him to make arrangements with the parents of Miss Rosse for the young

lady's legal adoption by his lordship, the marquis entertaining no doubt of Cecil's own consent. He informed his lawyer that Lady Trevor would find for him the young lady's address during the following week, when it would be forwarded to Mr. Barker. Upon the very evening succeeding that interview, the marquis experienced the pangs attending the return of his old enemy, the gout.

A physician was called in and counseled his lordship's return to his country house, and absolute rest and freedom from all excitement. Lord St. Leonards, chafing at his forced departure at a time when he especially desired to remain in town, journeyed down to St. Leonards and nursed his afflicted foot and growled at his long-suffering and devoted valet.

A week had passed, but no letter came from Lady Trevor. Lord St. Leonards telegraphed to her to send him Miss Rosse's address. She responded by telegram that she had not seen the young lady since his visit, and could not give it. The marquis, in a fury, telegraphed his lawyer to see Lady Trevor and learn where she had first met Miss Rosse. Mr. Barker called upon the widow and made the necessary inquiries. She informed him that a friend of hers, now in Italy, had recommended the young woman to her.

"I never knew the girl's address," she declared. "She used to come to me always for work. I never sent for her."

"But did you give out valuable work to a person

whose address you did not know, Lady Trevor?" asked the lawyer, gravely.

"It don't look business-like, I confess," said the baronet's widow. "I always was a thoughtless creature, and my friend's recommendation deprived me of all sense of caution."

"You know the marquis," said Mr. Barker. "When he sets his heart on having anything, he'll move heaven and earth, if possible, to obtain it. He has taken a fancy to this young girl, a remarkable fancy, and I am not sure but that, in his lonely old age, this craving of nature for filial care and affection is a demand that ought to be gratified, even at cost to yourself, Lady Trevor. In any case, whether others are pleased or displeased, he will have his own will. Now, if you will give me your friend's address in Italy, I will telegraph to her for Miss Rosse's address."

"I have not my friend's address," said the widow, desperately.

"Tell me your friend's name, and I'll find where she is, my lady."

"My friend's name?" stammered Lady Trevor. "Why, how can I remember who recommends to me my shop-keepers and sewing-women? I don't remember. And let me tell you, sir, that I don't approve my grandfather's project of adopting a low-born young woman into the place I should hold—"

"The place you forfeited, Lady Trevor, when you married against his lordship's will."

“He has forgiven me. Cease your insolence, Mr. Barker. How dare you remind me of the past when he has forgiven it? I will not hold any further communication with you concerning Miss Rosse. If she has not stolen my goods and fled the country—if she should ever present herself again at my house—I will procure her address and send it to my grandfather, as I promised. Till then, I desire not to be troubled about her.”

Mr. Barker took good care not to call upon Lady Trevor again. But he consulted a directory, and dispatched some of his clerks to search out every man named Ross in the district of Southwark, whether shoemaker or other artisan, and made every effort to find the supposed family of Cecil. A week passed in this vain search, and then the lawyer journeyed down to St. Leonards with his report.

The marquis was seated in his grand library, before a glowing hearth, and near a wide oriel window overlooking the park. One leg was upon a foot-rest, swathed in bandages. He was in a bad humor. His frosty blue eyes were colder and sterner than ever, and emitted a scintillant light. His mouth was compressed firmly under his bushy, white mustache. A little table at his elbow was covered with writing materials. He had just written a telegraphic dispatch to his granddaughter, Lady Trevor, to come to him by the first train.

“I’ve telegraphed her two or three times already,”

he muttered, "and I'll keep it up until she's here. Why don't Barker come?"

He rung his little silver call-bell fiercely.

His valet appeared.

"Let that message be sent immediately!" he commanded. "Do you hear, you blockhead? Why do you stand there like an idiot?"

"If you please, my lord, Mr. Barker's come."

"Show him in then, dolt! Was there ever such a fool? Off with you—"

The valet disappeared, and the next moment the lawyer entered.

"Here I am, tied down with this infernal gout," exclaimed the marquis. "And the doctor says I am not to be excited. How the Lord am I to help it? I've been expecting you these three days. Have you found Miss Rosse?"

"No, my lord. I've looked after every Ross in Southwark, and have not found the right one."

"You haven't a decent clerk in your office!" cried the marquis, testily. "Not found her? Do you suppose I am going to stand this cursed inefficiency of your apprentices? Have you seen Lady Trevor?"

"Not since the interview of which I wrote you. But I believe that her ladyship has Miss Rosse's address, and refuses to give it through fear of being supplanted in your favor by her."

"Supplanted in my favor—Lady Trevor never

was in my favor. But she is deceitful enough to play me such a trick."

The valet reappeared, with an envelope on a salver.

"A telegram, my lord!" he said.

The marquis tore open the envelope.

"It is from Lady Trevor!" he ejaculated, as his servant retired. "She is on her way. Will be here in an hour!"

"Then, my lord, you can question her for yourself. She may answer you when she would not deign to speak to me," said Mr. Barker. "But before she comes I have something of importance to say to you. I had scarcely begun my story. My clerks failed to find Miss Rosse's father, so I sent one of them, Brown—a smart fellow is Brown—to see what he could discover through Lady Trevor's hall-porter, the very man who would be likely to know Miss Rosse's address, if any servant of Lady Trevor's knew it."

"And Brown discovered—"

"That Miss Rosse had been employed by a Madame Lange, of Regent street, a dealer in fancy-work, embroideries, and fol-de-rols of that sort. The hall-porter said that Madame Lange had recommended Miss Rosse to Lady Trevor. The information cost Brown a pretty penny, which of course I repaid him."

"And then?"

"Then Brown went to Madame Lange, and

found that—but here comes in a mystery. He learned that Miss Rosse lives at Bayswater, but that she had left her lodgings to work for Lady Trevor, and that she was gone to Greycourt in Yorkshire.”

“And Edith played false all this while to me. She sent Miss Rosse to Yorkshire to get her out of my way, did she?”

“I telegraphed to Miss Rosse at Greycourt, but received no answer. Then I repeated the message ; still no answer. Then I telegraphed to a person of whom I know at Masham and requested him to go to Greycourt and see Miss Rosse for me. His answer came yesterday. Miss Rosse has not been at Greycourt.”

“Then where is she?”

“I have learned her address in Bayswater, and I went there. The landlady told me that Miss Rosse went away over a fortnight ago and she has not seen her since.”

“Her lodgings—Bayswater ! Then Edith has lied from the beginning ! There was no shoemaker father in Southwark, there are no brothers and sisters—Edith has deceived me throughout.”

“Precisely, my lord.”

“She was afraid I'd leave my money to a stranger. I see through her,” declared Lord St. Leonards, grimly. “But who could think that one of my blood could lie like that ? A false, deceitful woman like her mother. We will confront her with these

falsehoods of hers, and she shall tell us where Miss Rosse is."

"Perhaps she cannot do that, my lord. I find that Miss Rosse went to Lady Trevor's house on the day she quitted her lodgings, but she left Lady Trevor's house with her servant for Greycourt. She must have been lost on her way. She has not been long in England. She is of foreign birth and education. I cannot think that Lady Trevor is connected with Miss Rosse's disappearance."

"But I do think so," declared Lord St. Leonards, in the resolute tones of a perfect conviction. "She has sent the young lady somewhere else than to Greycourt, or she has frightened her out of the way. I must and will know the truth. Edith may have induced Miss Rosse to quit England. She may have procured her a situation as governess to get her out of my reach."

"I think your solution of the difficulty not the right one, my lord. Pray do not let prejudice cause you to accuse Lady Trevor of acts she probably could not have committed. It is clear, from the statement of the hall-porter to Mr. Brown, that Miss Rosse left South Audley street for Euston Square to take the train for Yorkshire. That much is proved."

"And Edith meant to hide Miss Rosse up there from my pursuit. Barker, let no expense be spared. This young girl must be found. Lost for two

whole weeks. Great Heaven, what can have become of her?"

"Her servant is with her and has shared her fate," said the lawyer. "They may have gone abroad to their former home. I shall send Brown to investigate that possibility—"

The door opened again, and the valet appeared.

"Lady Trevor has arrived, my lord!" he announced.

"Show her in here!" commanded the marquis. "Now for light, Barker! Be searching in your cross-examination!"



## CHAPTER XXV.

### AN UNEXPECTED ORDEAL.

Lady Trevor had received the repeated summonses of the old marquis, but had not dared to obey them until after the return to town of her confederate in crime. But when she had seen Mr. Pulford, and heard from his own lips that she had nothing more to fear in regard to Cecil Rosse, all her terrors and anxieties gave place to a delicious sense of security, and she set out upon her visit to St. Leonards in high spirits.

Throughout the journey she occupied herself with delightful visions. She had conceived the idea that the stern old lord was about to make a will devising to her all his transferable property, and that, more than this, he had invited her to his house to meet Lord Glenham, with a view to bring about a marriage between his granddaughter and the heir to his title and estates.

"I will do my share towards carrying out his plans," she thought. "I shall soon free myself from

Pulford's claims, and then I can marry the earl. I wonder if old Barker is at St. Leonards ready to draw up the new will?"

Upon alighting from the carriage and entering the grand hall of the mansion, she was met by the lady-housekeeper, with whom she was engaged for a moment while the marquis' valet, who was in waiting for the arrival, hastened to inform his master. He returned immediately, requesting Lady Trevor to join the marquis in the library.

"Very well," said the visitor, composedly. "Say to Lord St. Leonards that I will come to him as soon as I shall have become a little refreshed and rested. Mrs. Melville, be kind enough to conduct me to my room."

The housekeeper led the way up the state staircase to the wide upper hall and to a luxurious suite of rooms opening therefrom.

"My old rooms!" said Lady Trevor. "How long it is since I occupied them! I shall not be at St. Leonards a great deal hereafter, Mrs. Melville. By the way, is grandpapa's lawyer, Mr. Barker, at St. Leonards?"

"Yes, he is in the library with the marquis at this moment, your ladyship," replied Mrs. Melville.

Lady Trevor's eyes brightened.

"I supposed so," she commented. "Cerise, dress me at once. Mrs. Melville, be good enough to send me up a cup of tea, and have my boxes brought up."

Lady Trevor's orders were promptly obeyed.

The visitor drank her tea, and made an elegant toilette. The bloom and beauty of her brunette complexion were renewed. Her black hair was arranged in fresh puffs and braids and curls. Then, confident of her personal charms, and unsuspecting of the ordeal in store for her, her handsome face wreathed with smiles, she descended to the library.

The marquis and his lawyer were still in consultation when she swept in. Mr. Barker arose respectfully, greeting her with a low bow. The marquis, who was irritated at her long delay, regarded her with a pair of stormy eyes, and his stern old mouth wore a grim and sarcastic smile.

"You must excuse my rising, Edith," he said, with a glance at his swathed and bandaged leg. "So you've come—at last?"

Lady Trevor rushed towards the old marquis with a little cry of ecstasy.

"At last! dear grandpapa," she exclaimed, embracing him, much to his distaste. "I received your letters and telegrams, but I couldn't come before. I have been very ill, in bed, you know, but I have hastened to you as soon as my physician would allow me."

"Humph!" muttered Lord St. Leonards, who did not believe a word she said—he knew her too well for that. "So you've been ill?"

"Very ill," responded Lady Trevor, plaintively ;

"but I am better now, and I have flown to you, dear grandpapa, on the wings of love. To think of your being ill, and I, your only living descendant, not with you. I am *so* glad to see you again."

"Humph!" muttered the old marquis again.

"How naturally everything looks," said Lady Trevor, looking around her critically. "Nothing is changed since I lived here, grandpapa. I have my dear old rooms again, with the same furniture, and everything just as I left it fifteen or sixteen years ago. Nothing is changed except you and me, grandpapa. I am more thoughtful than I was in those old days. I have suffered so much. And you do not seem a day older than you did then."

"I suppose I look as if I intended to live forever," said the old lord, dryly.

"I only wish you could, grandpapa. Ah! Mr. Barker, how do you do? Your lawyer here, my lord? I hope you are not troubled about your illness—that you are not making your will, or anything like that?"

"Well, no, I am not," said Lord St. Leonards, comprehending that she had expected to assist at the ceremony of making his will. I expect to live many years yet. I come of a long-lived family, as you may remember. Sit down, Edith. Barker, please push Lady Trevor's chair near to mine."

The widow's face was all aglow with satisfaction as she sank into the proffered chair.

"Dear grandpapa," she exclaimed, "how good

you are to forgive my waywardness and disobedience at last. I have so longed for your pardon. And now, to crown your late kindness in visiting me at Castle Cliff, with this invitation to your home, this complete reconciliation, is a goodness that goes to my very soul. I am penitent enough for the past, I assure you. I repented my marriage with Sir Albert Trevor before I had been his wife a year. Shall everything be now between us as if there had never been a quarrel?" she asked, in her most honeyed tones. "May I not be the comfort of your declining years, my dear grandpa?"

The Marquis could not repress a look of disgust.

"We will dispense with sentiment, if you please, Edith," he remarked. "I have not sent for you with a view to any romantic reconciliation. If affairs turn out in the future to my satisfaction, I shall be pleased to be on friendly terms with you, but for the present I am content to leave our relations as they are."

"As they are? They are certainly very pleasant. I could ask nothing better," said Lady Trevor, determined to see in her summons to St. Leonards a mark of the old lord's renewed favor. "To be again an inmate of your home, dear grandpapa, forgiven by you for my past waywardness, more than contents me. When you know me better, I am sure that you will give me the love I crave from you, and which I deserve."

"Humph!" again said the old lord, grimly. "I

don't care to discuss our personal relations, Edith. I sent for you to come to me because I was unable to come to you. I want to ask a few questions?"

Lady Trevor glanced significantly at the lawyer.

"Oh, we can speak out before Mr. Barker," said the marquis, quickly. "In fact, his presence is necessary."

"Necessary?"

"Edith," said Lord St. Leonards, abruptly, "where is Miss Rosse?"

Lady Trevor started. In spite of her efforts at self-control, she trembled and was frightened. Her face blanched, and a scared look came into her hard black eyes.

"Miss Rosse?" she ejaculated. "Why do you ask me that question? Am I Miss Rosse's keeper?"

"Did not Cain return to his Maker an answer similar to that after he had killed his brother?" asked the marquis, sternly.

Lady Trevor put one shaking hand to her face, which had suddenly, in spite of the cosmetics that overlaid its surface, grown white and horrified, with a look upon it which, if he could have seen it, Mr. Barker could not have interpreted otherwise than as one of conscious guilt.

In truth, the question and the marquis' accusing tone struck terror to the woman's soul. She was unable to answer, and sat as if paralyzed.

There was a brief silence, which was broken by the impatient marquis.

"I informed you, Edith," he exclaimed, "of my desire to adopt this young girl, who has taken so strong a hold upon my heart. I told you of my loneliness, of my desire for pleasant companionship, and of my intention of asking this girl to become my child and heiress. You told me that she was of low birth, that her father was a shoe-cobbler in Southwark, and that her relatives were ignorant. This was false, and you knew it."

Lady Trevor made a movement to speak, but no sound issued from her parched throat, which she clutched with one desperate hand while she shaded her face with the other.

"I set Barker upon the track of Miss Rosse," continued Lord St. Leonards, "and he discovered that she was of foreign birth, without a known relative, and that she lived in respectable lodgings in a very respectable house in Bayswater. He discovered, too, that she had sewed embroidery for one, Madame Lange, a French fancy-work dealer of Regent street. He learned also that Madame Lange had recommended the young lady to you. This is the true story, and yours was utterly false!"

Still Lady Trevor sat immovable.

"Barker set his men to work," pursued the old lord, "and made further discoveries. Miss Rosse quitted her lodgings in Bayswater over two weeks ago, giving up her rooms, and informing her landlady that she had entered your service for the winter, and that she was to proceed to your country seat in

Yorkshire, to spend some months in repairing your tapestry work. Miss Rosse went away in a cab, attended by her old servant, and has not since been seen or heard of by her old landlady. Miss Rosse went to your house in South Audley street—”

“And went away again,” interrupted Lady Trevor, huskily. “I can prove that!”

“Barker has proved it. She went away again, as you say. But where did she go?”

“How do I know?” retorted Lady Trevor, with half-suppressed fierceness. “She had her servant with her, and the pair set out for Greycourt, as I supposed, and as was agreed upon between us. The girl and her attendant were alike ignorant of London. Both were credulous, simple and unsuspecting, They may have got into trouble. They may have become lost. They may have found some situation that suited them better than the one I offered. Or, as seems more probable, they may have suddenly changed their purpose and gone back to their former home. All I know is, that they have not appeared at Greycourt.”

“Where is their former home?” asked the marquis.

“Really, I don’t know,” said Lady Trevor, beginning to resume command of herself, seeing that all was not lost, and that her secret remained unsuspected. “I am not in the habit of inquiring into the antecedents of the servants I employ. Madame Lange recommended her, I did not go behind that recommendation.”

"I can learn through the Bayswater landlady Miss Rosse's exact former address," said Mr. Barker. "I presume she can give it. Mrs. Thomas told me that Miss Rosse came from Germany."

"Then perhaps Miss Rosse is gone back to Germany," said the marquis, totally unsuspecting still of Miss Rosse's identity with the lady whom Lord Glenham desired to marry. "But I cannot think she would have gone without informing her friends, or you, Edith, to whom she had engaged herself for a term of months. She cannot have gone back secretly, like a fugitive. Then where is she? Have you received no message from her, Edith, since she left your house with her servant in a cab over two weeks ago?"

"I have not!" answered Lady Trevor, firmly.

"It is a strange mystery!" said Mr. Barker. "I have traced her to and from Lady Trevor's house, but with her departure from South Audley street all clew to Miss Rosse and her old servant is lost. Two persons have disappeared in London streets in broad daylight, and there is left no trace of them. It seems incredible!"

"You have traced Miss Rosse from my house," cried Lady Trevor, "and yet you dare come to my grandfather, Mr. Barker, and accuse me of some crime, and try to poison his mind against me!"

"Edith," exclaimed Lord St. Leonards, "you have proven yourself false and deceitful. I told you, after meeting Miss Rosse at your house, of my

determination to seek her out and persuade her to become my child by adoption. Why, then, did you engage her to go to Greycourt to work for you? You desired to get her out of my way; you wished to hide her from me! Is not this true? Deny it if you can!"

"I have no wish to deny it," replied Lady Trevor. "I understood from Madame Lange that Miss Rosse was of a low family. I saw that you were infatuated with her beauty. I did not believe her worthy of the place in your home and heart you desired to give her. I liked her work. I had need of her services. So I engaged her to go to Greycourt, partly, I own, that she might be out of your way until I had had time to win your heart, and partly that you might not act upon a generous impulse, which you might afterwards regret. There is the whole truth. If I have done wrong, you can blame me. I am sure that I have suffered enough to be pitied."

She uncovered her face. That she had suffered was apparent in the haggard eyes and drawn visage, but the nature of her suffering was not so plain.

"Is this true, Edith?" demanded the old marquis, sternly and solemnly. "As God hears you, do you know nothing of the whereabouts or the fate of Miss Rosse?"

"As God hears me, I do not!" declared Lady Trevor, with equal solemnity, but with an irrepres-

sible shudder. "Grandpapa, of what do you suspect me? Let me know the worst."

"I have thought it possible that you may have procured Miss Rosse a situation elsewhere than in Yorkshire, or that you may have sent her back to her old home—"

"I demand an investigation. Send for the best detectives at Scotland Yard. Question my servants. I insist upon the fullest investigation," cried Lady Trevor, in a fine flash of seeming indignation. "If you can believe one of your blood guilty of treachery and baseness, grandpapa, I hope you will prosecute me mercilessly until my innocence is proved. I am alone in the world—" she clasped her hands together and turned her hard, black eyes upward— "alone and friendless. My own grandfather turns against me. I wish—oh, I wish that I were dead!"

She drew forth a lace-trimmed handkerchief and covered her eyes, while she gave way to a burst of sobs that were by no means fictitious. She had been wrought up to the point of hysterics, and her angry emotion passed very well for an outburst of grief and indignation.

The old lord regarded his lawyer reproachfully. Despite his dislike of his grandchild, and his distrust of her, the marquis could not in his heart believe her really base and wicked, although there were times when he suspected her of a hideous crime in the past.

"There, there, Edith," he exclaimed, testily. "If

there's anything I hate, it's to see a woman cry. If you've not sent Miss Rosse out of the country, or done her any harm through your absurd jealousy, you've nothing to cry about."

"But you don't be—believe me!"

"That needn't trouble you," replied the old marquis, coolly. "I never used to believe you, you know. But I don't quite think you capable of crime, Edith, nor do I think one of my blood can be utterly lost to honor. And if you solemnly declare that Miss Rosse's fate is as great a mystery to you as to me, I suppose I shall believe you!"

"I swear that I know no more of her whereabouts than you do!" ejaculated Lady Trevor, with another irrepressible shudder.

"Enough. With all your faults, I cannot believe that you would perjure yourself by swearing to a lie, Edith. We shall find Miss Rosse. Barker will institute a thorough and complete search for her. And when I do find her, if she will consent, I shall adopt her legally and make her my heiress. So your amiable efforts in my behalf will be frustrated, Edith, and any hopes you may have built upon succeeding to my unentailed property will be without fulfilment."

"You have said all that you wished to say, grand-papa? You desire me to leave St. Leonards at once?"

"Not so. You are welcome to stay as long as you like, as my guest, but not as my heiress. I expect

Lord Glenham and his mother to join us, and I particularly desire you to remain throughout their visit."

"Your wish shall be my law, grandpapa, even though I am less to you than this sewing girl you have seen but twice," said Lady Trevor, bitterly. "And now, if you will excuse me, I will retire to the drawing-room to recover from my agitation. But one last word. I beg you to believe that I shall join in the search for Miss Rosse with as much energy as even you can display. You seem to suspect me of some treachery in regard to Miss Rosse, and I am determined to find her in order to clear myself in your sight. That much at least my own self-respect demands."

She arose and withdrew to the drawing-room.

There was a brief silence after her departure, which was broken by the old marquis.

"Well?" he exclaimed, testily. "What have you to say, Barker?"

"I don't know what to say," replied the lawyer, frankly. "Lady Trevor acknowledges having tried to get Miss Rosse out of your reach, but professes to be as ignorant as ourselves of Miss Rosse's whereabouts. She has sworn to her ignorance—"

"And consequently we must believe her," interrupted the old lord. "The mystery becomes deeper than ever. Where can Miss Rosse be? Set your clerks at work, engage a detective to pursue the search, and scour Europe from end to end—but find

the missing girl ! There is some great wickedness involved in her disappearance. She has some secret enemy, perhaps, who seeks to compass her destruction. Whatever the mystery, we must solve it !"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE EARL AND THE TRAITOR.

Upon the same day on which Lady Trevor arrived at St. Leonards, the Earl of Glenham, accompanied by his mother, returned from his trip to the Continent, and proceeded directly to a private family hotel in Piccadilly. He had visited Norlitz, and had learned to his amazement, of the Herr Pastor's death and of Rosse's departure for England, attended by Gretchen. He had been informed also of Maltravers's visit to Norlitz, and was greatly puzzled to account for it, he having been kept in ignorance of his companion's passion for Cecil. He was more puzzled at Craiton's reticence in regard to his visit, and during his journey back to London telegraphed to his treacherous kinsman to meet that evening at his hotel.

Lord Glenham dined with his mother in the private parlour. After the dinner they sat in the library to wait the coming of the Countess.



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He had visited Zorlitz, and had learned, to his amazement, of the Herr Pastor's death and of Cecil Rosse's departure for England, attended by old Gretchen. He had been informed also of Maldred Crafton's visit to Zorlitz, and was greatly puzzled to account for it, he having been kept in ignorance of his companion's passion for Cecil. He was even more puzzled at Crafton's reticence in regard to that visit, and, during his journey back to London, had telegraphed to his treacherous kinsman to meet him that evening at his hotel.

Lord Glenham dined with his mother in their private parlor. After the dinner they settled themselves to await the coming of Crafton, both anxious

and restless. The countess ensconced herself in a high-backed chair at the corner of the hearth, and shaded her face with her fan. That haughty, high-bred face wore a greatly troubled expression. The proud old eyes were full of anxiety and apprehension. She had known, before her departure for the Continent, that Cecil Rosse was no longer at Zorlitz. Crafton having deemed it best to inform her of his secret visit to the Black Forest. She had kept this knowledge to herself until now, but at what cost she best knew. With a nice sense of honor, proud of her truthfulness and courage, it required all her idolatrous love for her son, all her strong determination to save him from the clutches of a supposed adventuress, to reconcile her to the part she was playing.

The earl was too absorbed in his own anxieties to pay special heed to those of his mother. His fair and noble face looked haggard and worn ; his warm grey eyes were full of trouble. He arose and began to pace the floor.

"Strange that Crafton does not come!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch.

"Perhaps he did not receive your telegram," suggested the countess.

"It would have been forwarded to him, and if he were in England he would have had time to precede us here. I have trusted him as if he were my brother. I cannot suspect his motives in revisiting Zorlitz secretly—yet why did he not tell me? He

knew that Herr Brocken was dead, and that Cecil—my innocent, child-like Cecil—was in London. Where can she have found refuge? I tell you, mother, when I think of Cecil, so ignorant of the world, so unsuspecting and guileless, adrift in this great wicked London, exposed to a thousand perils, I feel as if I should go mad.”

“You forget always that she has her servant with her, Gordon.”

“Her servant, a simple peasant woman of the Black Forest, as credulous as a child, would be no protection to her. To the contrary, Gretchen might lead her into perils, which, if left to herself, her superior intelligence would cause her to avoid. But it cannot be impossible to trace Cecil. Her youth, her wonderful beauty, her patrician air, will render her marked wherever she may be seen—”

A knock upon the door caused them both to start. A servant entered, bearing a card upon a salver.

“Maldred Crafton!” read Lord Glenham taking up the bit of pasteboard. “Show him up at once.”

The servant retired. Neither mother nor son spoke again until Crafton was ushered into the room.

The traitor came in with a smile on his swarthy visage. His manner, as usual, was plausible and insinuating. His small black eyes were joyful in their expression, and he held out his hand with a cordiality that appeared to apprehend no failure of response.

But the earl kept his own hand at his side. His blond features wore a stern look. The warmth in his eyes gave place to a coldness which Crafton had never seen in them before.

"How do you do, Gordon?" inquired Crafton, not appearing to note the changed manner of his kinsman, or the tacit refusal to clasp his hand. "Welcome home again. I am glad to see you, Lady Glenham!"

The countess arose. Crafton was in a measure her confederate in her scheme to save her son from a marriage distasteful to her, and she was compelled to greet him in a friendly manner. But she, animated by noble, although mistaken, motives, and by an idolatrous affection for her son, was as different from Crafton as day is different from night. She was secretly ashamed of her confederation with him, and despised him for his readiness to cheat the friend who had so implicitly trusted in him, yet she believed that his aid was essential to her plans.

"I am glad to see you again, Mr. Crafton," she said, shaking hands with him. "We are just returned from Zorlitz."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Crafton, easily. "I received your telegram, Glenham, last evening. I was in Yorkshire, and it was forwarded to me. You are looking ill. Has anything happened?"

"Will you sit down?" asked the earl. "You cannot be unprepared for what I have to say to you, Crafton, now that you know that I have been to

Zorlitz. Has your conduct during the past few weeks been that of a loyal friend?"

"It has, indeed!" exclaimed Crafton, heartily. "Why do you ask such an absurd question? Do you suspect me of disloyalty?"

"I have been informed of your secret visit to Zorlitz. When you left Breezy Lodge on the very morning after our arrival there, pretending that you found it absolutely necessary to return to London on business, you went straight to Zorlitz, as fast as steam could carry you. Can you deny this?"

"I cannot. I have no wish to deny it. By Jove, Gordon, you don't mean to condemn your best friend and throw him over without giving him a chance of explanation or self-defence? I wouldn't have believed that you would have condemned me unheard."

The air of injured innocence which Crafton assumed staggered his accuser.

"If you have anything to say for yourself," said the earl, gravely, "I am ready to hear it."

"I came to London from Breezy Lodge on business, as I told you," declared Crafton, boldly, having planned his defence in advance; and when I arrived in town I found that my seal ring—the Crafton heirloom—you remember how greatly I have always cherished it, and with a sort of superstition, as I am willing to confess—I found that my ring was missing. You can imagine the panic I was in, I remembered that the last time I saw it

was in our lodgings at Zorlitz. I laid it down upon my wash-stand in my bed-room. I had no remembrance of picking it up again, and I knew that I must have left it there. I could not telegraph to Zorlitz, so I took the first train for Dover, and posted through with all speed. And I found my ring!"

He pulled off one of his gloves as he spoke, and displayed his massive seal ring.

His story had been told with such an appearance of honesty that the young earl was constrained to believe it.

But Lady Glenham knew that the tale was false, and her haughty old face flushed hot with shame that she should be leagued with this man to deceive her son.

"When you arrived at Zorlitz, you found that the Herr Pastor was dead," said Lord Glenham, "and that Miss Rosse had departed for England. Yet when you returned to Breezy Lodge you concealed these facts from me."

"I plead guilty of the charge. But how could I tell you, Gordon? You were encumbered with a party of invited guests. You could not have discovered Miss Rosse sooner than I could have done. I never for one instant faltered in my simple loyalty to you, my friend. I kept my secret, fearing to distress you, and determined to seek Miss Rosse and find her, and then to tell you all. I never once imagined that my motives might be suspected. I

thought that we had been friends too long for suspicion to come between us."

The earl took a step nearer Crafton. Then he paused again, in indecision.

"Have you sought Miss Rosse?" he inquired. "Have you found her?"

Crafton hesitated. His intimacy with the Earl of Glenham had benefited him very materially in many ways. He could relinquish it for the sake of his love for Cecil Rosse; but Miss Rosse had disappeared mysteriously, leaving no clue to her fate. Until he could regain her, it might be well for him to maintain his apparent friendship for the earl, to watch his lordship's movements, and to share his life. He concluded, upon the whole, that the earl would discover through Lady Trevor that he, Crafton, had visited her to make inquiries after Miss Rosse; and it would be best to forestall Lady Trevor, and make confession in a manner to reflect credit upon himself.

"I have sought Miss Rosse everywhere," he exclaimed. "You remember that I made but a brief stay after my return to Breezy Lodge. I was anxious to find Miss Rosse, and to restore her to you. I searched London from one end to the other. I haunted the streets at the West End. I made inquiries in every place I deemed it possible that she had taken refuge. And at last, quite by chance, I found her!"

"You found her?" cried the earl, springing forward, his eyes alight.

Lady Glenham started. Was Crafton about to reveal the conspiracy she had entered into with him? Would her son, whom she so idolized, despise and hate her for the part she had taken? A low moan escaped her lips, and she sank back in her chair, pallid and gasping. No one noticed her agitation.

"Yes, I found her," replied Crafton, recoiling before the earl's impetuous advance. "I met her in Regent street, attended by Gretchen. Miss Rosse was doing embroidery work for Madame Lange, a French fancy-work dealer. She gave me her address, which I have written upon a card somewhere."

"Give it to me—"

"Here it is!" said Crafton, producing it. "But Miss Rosse is no longer at that address. She has disappeared in the most mysterious fashion. I expected to be able to find her for you before you should discover her loss. I have searched for her during the past two weeks, but I can find no trace of her!"

"Lost!" cried the earl, aghast. "Why, what can you mean? Explain yourself, Crafton."

"I have worked for you," said Crafton, plaintively, "I have tried to spare you this sorrow at all cost to myself, and my reward is to be considered a traitor to you. I had thought that our years of

friendship would vouch for me that you would trust me through good and evil report, as I would have trusted you—”

“Forgive me, Crafton,” interrupted the earl, impulsively, stretching out his hand and grasping the reluctant member of the traitor. “You must own that I had cause to be grieved. I could not understand your reticence in regard to that visit and Cecil’s coming to London. I grant that your motives for concealment were not incompatible with your loyalty to me. Again, forgive me !”

“Willingly—freely !” ejaculated Crafton. Let us say no more upon so painful a subject as your injustice to me. Miss Rosse has disappeared, Glenham, completely and utterly, as if she had vanished from the earth. It is one of those unaccountable disappearances that occur now and then, and which puzzle the keenest detective. She had engaged to sew some embroidery-work for Lady Trevor—”

“For Lady Trevor ?” exclaimed the countess, involuntarily.

“Singular complication, is it not ? But Lady Trevor had no idea that she was the Miss Rosse of Zorlitz. Madame Lange recommended the young lady to Lady Trevor, and her ladyship engaged her to go to Greycourt for the winter to repair some valuable tapestry. Miss Rosse, accompanied by Gretchen, having relinquished her lodgings at Bayswater, proceeded in a cab to South Audley street for directions for the journey. She alighted at

Lady Trevor's house, the footman summoned a fresh cab, and the order was given to Euston Square station. The cab rolled away, with Miss Rosse and old Gretchen inside—and they haven't been seen since.

The earl stood as if turned to stone.

"I traced Miss Rosse to and from Lady Trevor's house," continued Crafton. "I have questioned the cabman who conveyed her to South Audley street. The second cab was a chance one, and there is no clew to trace it. I have worked very quietly but thoroughly, and the mystery remains impenetrable."

Lady Glenham's eyes scanned Crafton's face keenly. She saw that he was telling the truth, and breathed more freely.

"The mystery will soon be solved," exclaimed the earl, arousing from his brief stupor. "I will find Cecil. Where is Lady Trevor?"

"At St. Leonards, visiting her grandfather."

"We are expected at St. Leonards to-morrow," said the earl. "We will go down by the morning train. I will see Lady Trevor and discover if she can throw any fresh light upon the matter. And if she cannot, I will leave you at St. Leonards, mother, while I return to prosecute my search for Miss Rosse. Have you no theory in regard to this matter, Crafton?"

"I have," replied Crafton, gloomily. "I sometimes think that the cabman may have murdered the young lady and her servant for their money



LADY GLENHAM ROSE UP, WHITE AND EXCITED.—See Page 334.



But oftener I think that some scoundrel, infatuated with Miss Rosse's beauty, may have seized her and deprived her of her liberty. The idea is not probable. Such deeds are not in keeping with these prosaic days—but what else can I think? She has not gone back to Zorlitz—or you would have seen her. She has not returned to her lodgings at Bayswater. Madame Lange has not seen her; she has not arrived at Greycourt, although the honest old housekeeper had prepared a room for her, and had sent to the station to meet her at the time appointed for her coming. I have begun to despair of finding her. But if you and I work together, Glenham, we may succeed!"

"We will work together!" exclaimed the earl again grasping the hand of his secret enemy. "We will go over the whole ground from the beginning. We will trace her from the moment of leaving Lady Trevor's house. I will see Lady Trevor to-morrow, and meet you here in this room to-morrow evening. Great Heaven! Where can she be? What can have happened her?" and his voice was sharp with his agony. "Two weeks lost! I fear that she is dead?"



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING.

The young Earl of Glenham, accompanied by his mother, proceeded by an early train to St. Leonards, in Sussex, upon the day following their interview with Maldred Crafton at the little family hotel in Piccadilly. They were met at the St. Leonards railway station by the marquis's carriage, and conveyed over the three miles of beautiful country to the magnificent estate which the earl was some day to inherit. The gates of the picturesque gray stone lodge swung open at their approach, and the carriage rolled into the noble park, and moved along the wide and stately avenue, bordered by ancient elms, towards the mansion, which was not yet in sight.

The countess looked from the open carriage window upon the great oak trees, upon the browsing deer, and upon the glittering waters of the lake in the distance, and her haughty old face flushed with pride, as she exclaimed :

“You are one of the most fortunate of men, Gordon. Your title and estates inherited from your father were great and noble. By the failure of the main line of the Ravendales, you, sprung from a distant branch of the same family, will succeed to the title and estates of the Marquis of St. Leonards. You will be doubly a peer, the possessor of two magnificent fortunes, and one of the most powerful noblemen in England. I have but one more wish for you, and that is that you may recover from your infatuation for Miss Rosse and marry Lady Trevor.”

“That wish can never be fulfilled,” declared the earl, gravely, his blond face growing stern. “I shall never recover from what you are pleased to term my infatuation with Miss Rosse. I shall marry her, if she will accept me as her husband. If I cannot find her, or if she refuses to marry me, I shall never marry.”

And Lady Glenham knew that he meant what he said, and that his resolve was immutable as the decrees of fate. She leaned back upon the yielding cushions, her face pale, her heart aching with a dreary anguish too great for expression.

The two sat in silence throughout the remainder of the drive. The carriage drew up before the great and massive porch, and Mr. Barker came down the steps and opened the door. He escorted the guests into the house, where they were met by the lady housekeeper, who conducted Lady Glenham to the rooms that had been prepared for her. The earl

made inquiries after the health of the old marquis, ascertained that Lady Trevor was in the house, and then followed the guidance of the butler to her apartment.

The countess made her toilette with the assistance of her maid, and descended to the drawing-room. As she entered, Lady Trevor arose from a sofa near the fire and rushed forward to meet her, with a little cry of joy and affectation of impulsiveness.

"I am so glad to see you!" cried Lady Trevor, embracing the old countess. "But you are not looking well. Have you been ill?"

Lady Glenham was *not* looking well. Her troubles preyed upon her. The course she was pursuing to save her son from marrying a supposed adventuress was torture to the honorable, falsehood-abhorring lady.

"I am not quite well, I think," she replied, trying to smile. "Oh, Edith, these strange, new complications in regard to Miss Rosse trouble me more than I can tell you. Ah, here comes Gordon!"

The earl made his appearance. He had scarcely greeted Lady Trevor, when Mr. Barker entered, requesting the guests to visit the old marquis in the library, Lord St. Leonards being unable to come to them.

There was no opportunity for conversation between the earl and Lady Trevor. He was impatient to ask her many questions in regard to Cecil Rosse, but was obliged to defer them until after his interview

with Lord St. Leonards. The guests, Lady Trevor included, followed Mr. Barker to the library.

The old marquis was seated in a great arm-chair, his suffering foot, bandaged and swathed, resting upon another chair. His leonine old face was turned towards the door with a look of expectancy. His keen, frosty blue eyes lighted up with sudden warmth at sight of the young earl, and he held out his hands in greeting to his heir, whom he loved as a son.

"I am glad to see you, my dear boy," he exclaimed. "Welcome, countess. Excuse my not rising, but my old enemy has me fast."

Lady Glenham advanced and shook hands with him. Further greetings were exchanged, and the visitors were seated. Lord St. Leonards inquired when the earl and his mother had returned from Germany, but their object in visiting Zorlitz was not mentioned. The subject of the earl's misplaced affections was too distasteful to the old marquis to be broached in his first interview with his guests.

After the usual remarks and inquiries incident to a meeting after a few weeks' separation, the old lord introduced the mystery that occupied so large a share of his thoughts.

"I am greatly troubled, Gordon," he exclaimed, "and I want your help. A most perplexing mystery, which I would give much to solve, baffles Barker and me also. Possibly your young, keen intellect may find a solution where we have failed."

Lady Trevor grew pale. She knew what was coming, and gathered all her powers of self-possession to meet the strain demanded of them. Would Lord Glenham, whom she knew to be especially keen-witted, would he suspect her of having been concerned in Cecil Rosse's disappearance? Would he suspect that a terrible crime had been committed? And would he accuse her as the author of that crime? Would he suspect the deep and hideous secret of her life? Would he detect the crime she had committed years before, and which, in spite of all her boldness and hardihood, had haunted and tortured her all these years like some frightful and continuous nightmare? She trembled and her heart beat furiously, but her face was as impassive and quiet as though conscience were dead within her, and no fear of discovery and exposure ever troubled her—so great was her faculty of self-control.

"I am safe, perfectly safe!" she said to herself "The girl can never be traced. Her fate will never be discovered. I have nothing whatever to fear. A bold front will carry me through!"

She assumed the bold front, and Mr. Barker, who was watching her secretly and intently, was deceived by it, and changed certain opinions he had already formed. He had not been quite ready to acquit the handsome widow of all knowledge of Cecil Rosse's present whereabouts, knowing so well the capabilities of evil in her nature, and believing her madly

in love with the Earl of Glenham, but now he said to himself that he had certainly misjudged her.

"If I can be of any assistance to you, Marquis," responded the young earl, "I beg you to accept my services. You speak of a perplexing mystery—"

"Yes. Some weeks ago, the night after my return to London from the Scottish highlands, I was attacked in a quiet street just out of Regent street by two bold ruffians, who attempted to garrote and rob me. I escaped from them and ran, after a little struggle in which I found that I was no match for them. They pursued and overtook me, and hurled me to the ground. In the same instant a young girl who had witnessed the affair from the corner of Regent street, came flying toward me, screaming at the top of her voice. The rascals took to their heels, and I escaped their clutches with a few slight bruises."

"What a heroic girl!" exclaimed Lady Glenham. "Most young ladies would have fainted, or would have fled in an opposite direction."

"I dare say that I owe my life to her," said the old lord, with emotion. "I did not obtain her address, perhaps owing to the bewilderment of my mind consequent upon the assault that had been made upon me. She signalled a passing omnibus and was borne away with a serving-woman who attended her. I regretted afterwards that I had not followed her home. I believed her to be the petted darling of some noble house. She was strikingly beautiful,

as graceful as a willow, well-bred and with a sort of youthful majesty that well became her. I never saw a young girl before with such distinguished bearing."

"Quite a romance!" said the old countess, deeply interested. "I suppose that you never saw her again?"

"But I did. I saw her at Lady Trevor's house in South Audley street, and she turned out to be an embroideress—"

Lady Glenham laughed. The old marquis flushed angrily.

"She was none the less a lady because she was forced to earn her own living," he exclaimed. "I was even more struck than before by her splendid beauty, by her unconscious air of youthful majesty; by her pure, clear, truthful gaze, by her tender loveliness—"

The countess glanced at Mr. Barker in alarm. Had Lord St. Leonards, at nearly eighty years of age, fallen in love with some low-born beauty?

The marquis intercepted her glance and read her thought. A sardonic smile gathered about his cynical mouth, but he continued quietly.

"I inquired into the young lady's history. Learning that she was obliged to work for her support, and being strangely touched by her lovely face, I resolved, if she would consent, to adopt her as my grandchild, or ward, and as my heiress!"

"What madness!" murmured the countess.

"I see many lonely hours," said Lord St. Leonards, sorrowfully. "I am in the full measure of my strength, both mental and physical—but for this accursed attack of gout. I occupy myself with politics, but I have little else to take up my mind or time. My home is lonely. I brood over my little grandchild's death. I think of her by day and night and plan what I would have done if little Alba had lived. My great rooms are empty and silent. My servants go about silently in list slippers. It is always as if there were a death in the house. I yearn for pleasant companionship, for faces to brighten at my coming, for filial love and care and tenderness. I am long past the years for any other love, but if I had only a grandchild to make my life brighter my last days might be full of peace instead of utter loneliness and desolation."

The countess looked shocked.

"My dear Marquis," she exclaimed, "do you forget that you have a grandchild living? Do you forget that she is present to hear these strange words of yours? Surely you would not wound our dear Edith so cruelly as to forget her claims?"

"I am sure," said Lady Trevor, with her lace trimmed handkerchief at her eyes. "I could ask no greater pleasure in life than to devote myself to my dear grandpapa."

The marquis smiled cynically.

"Lady Trevor and I quite understand each other, my dear countess," he remarked. "You know how

deeply she loved me when she ran away and married Sir Albert Trevor against my will and that of her father? She has always considered herself first—let her continue to do so. I do not crave the society of a woman of the world. I do not desire an interested affection. But I believe there is enough of good in me to win the filial regard of a young and innocent girl, whom I should grow to love and cherish as if she were of my own blood. Does my idea seem Quixotic? It never occurred to me until I had met this young lady of whom I have spoken. Her eyes, very like a pair of eyes I once knew and loved, have haunted me since the hour of our first meeting. I determined to adopt her, if she would consent. I confided my resolve to Barker, and he set his clerks to discover the young lady's address."

"Why did you not obtain it of Edith, if the young person sewed for her?" asked the countess.

"I endeavored to do so, and failed. Perhaps Edith will herself explain that part of the story to you. Barker's agents discovered that the lady lived at Bayswater—"

"Number Four, Queen's Crescent, Argyle street," interpolated the lawyer.

"But when Barker's clerk called at the house the young lady was gone!"

"Gone!" repeated Lady Glenham in a perplexed tone. "Where had she gone?"

"That is the mystery!" cried the marquis. "She

quitted her lodgings, declaring to her landlady that she had engaged herself to Lady Trevor for a term of months to repair some tapestry work at Grey-court. She left her lodgings in a cab for Lady Trevor's house, alighted there, took another cab, and drove to Euston Square railway station, and has not been seen since ! She has mysteriously and utterly disappeared, and no clew can be found to her fate !”

A great and growing agitation convulsed both the earl and his mother. Lady Glenham was struck with consternation : the earl appeared too amazed for words. The story of Maldred Crafton upon the previous night tallied strangely with this. The identity of the girl who had so strangely attracted the marquis was plain to the earl.

“What was the young lady's name?” he asked, after a pause.

“Miss Rosse !” answered the marquis.

“Miss Rosse !” echoed Lady Glenham, bitterly. “She has bewitched you, my lord, it seems, as she bewitched my son. She is Cecil Rosse, of Zorlitz !”

The marquis started in a manner to cause a thrill of acutest agony in his swollen foot. His ejaculation of amazement became one of physical anguish.

“The pastor of Zorlitz is dead,” said the earl, “and Miss Rosse came to London to earn her bread. It is she who attracted you so strangely marquis. It is she whose fate has become entangled in mystery !”

The old lord looked bewildered.

"You have seen for yourself," continued Lord Glenham, in a voice of agitation, "that she is a pure and noble lady, and no adventuress. I heard much of this story last night in London. I came down here hoping that Lady Trevor might be able to throw some light upon the matter."

"I cannot," replied the baronet's widow, her hard, black eyes harder than ever. "The young woman was recommended to me by a French woman who has done a great deal of work for me. I found her skilful with her needle, and remarkably ingenious and artistic, therefore I engaged her to repair some moth-eaten tapestry at Greycourt which I greatly value. The name of Rosse is so common in England that I never suspected her identity with the Miss Rosse whom Lord Glenham met in the Black Forest. She came to my house in a cab, to obtain explicit directions for reaching Greycourt. The cabman declared his horse unable to proceed farther, and he was dismissed and another cab ordered, to convey Miss Rosse and her servant to Euston Square station. I wrote to my old housekeeper at Greycourt to meet Miss Rosse at the nearest railway station, and ordered her to have rooms prepared for the young lady and her servant. I gave no further thought to the matter, and supposed Miss Rosse to be at Greycourt until Mr. Crafton and Mr. Barker, at different times, came to inquire after her. This, in brief, is all I know of what grandpapa is

pleased to call a mystery. The case seems to be simple enough. Miss Rosse changed her mind about going to Yorkshire, and turned her steps in a different direction. Those who know her best might be able to tell where she would be likely to go. Or else, mistaking the directions, she alighted at the wrong station and met with some accident or adventure that detained her."

Mr. Parker and Maldred Crafton could have confirmed much of Lady Trevor's statement. Lord Glenham, who did not know her so well as did the marquis, believed her implicitly.

"She may have fallen among thieves," said Mr. Barker. "She and her servant were brought up in a secluded hamlet of the Black Forest, and are perfectly ignorant of the wickedness of the great world. Some harm must have happened her, or she would have communicated with Lady Trevor, or Mrs. Thomas, the lodging-house keeper."

"I shall return to town by the afternoon train," said the earl, his features stern and resolved, "and I shall not give over the search for her until she is found, or this terrible mystery solved. Mr. Barker, let me know all that you have done. I shall go over the same ground, but more carefully, and your proceedings may serve as a guide to me."

The lawyer rehearsed the story of his researches in every detail. The old marquis sat silent, digesting the fact of the identity of the young lady who had so won upon him with the supposed adventuress

against whom he had warned the earl. Lord St. Leonards, with all his faults of pride and prejudice was pre-eminently just. His infatuation with Cecil conquered his ambition in regard to the marriage of his heir with his granddaughter. When Mr. Barker had concluded and the earl had ceased his eager questionings, the old lord exclaimed :

"Gordon, I did Miss Rosse a flagrant injustice in condemning her as an adventuress. I take back what I said. Now that I have seen her, I will stake my life upon her purity and nobleness. She is worthy even of you. What matters her origin? I will adopt her as my grandchild, if she will consent. Some awful peril besets her. Find her, rescue her, bring her to me, and you shall have my consent to your marriage with her !"

Lady Glenham rose up, white and excited, her haughty old face full of passionate anger.

"But I," she cried, "will never consent that my son should marry a girl without name or parentage. I have not seen her, Marquis, but a pretty face would never influence *my* ideas of right and wrong. The girl is no fitting mate for the representative of a noble house. Let her keep to her needle and her obscurity. If Gordon marries her, he shall do so with his mother's curse. You may look for her, all of you, but I hope that you will not find her. I would rather that the girl were dead than that she should live to become my son's wife !"

Lady Trevor's black eyes gleamed behind the screen of her handkerchief with a baleful glow.

"The countess will have her wish," she thought, with malignant glee. "And I—if I wait patiently—shall catch the earl's heart in the rebound. Patience! Patience shall be my watchward! And I shall win the game!"



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE LOVER'S SEARCH.

Lord Glenham returned to town, in company with Mr. Barker, by the train he had mentioned. He began his search for Cecil Rosse that very evening. Accompanied by Mr. Barker, he drove from the railway station in a cab directly to Number Four, Queen's Crescent, and obtained an interview with Mrs. Thomas. The worthy landlady was found in a condition of anxiety bordering upon despair. She extolled her lost young lodger in the highest terms, and declared her conviction that she and old Gretchen had been murdered. She had not heard from either since they had left her house on their way to South Audley street. She told of all the mysterious disappearances of which she had heard in the course of her existence, and declared her conviction that if Miss Rosse were living, she would have written to her, Mrs. Thomas.

"The Lord knows," she sobbed, "that I never see a truer lady than she, And I loved her, and

she knew it. She'd a never quit the country without telling me, or giving directions about the box she left with me. To think as I advised her to go to Yorkshire to that lonely house, and as perhaps I'm guilty of her death, that's what troubles me !"

With a heavy heart, the young earl proceeded to his hotel, dropping Mr. Barker on the way. He found Maldred Crafton awaiting him, and informed him of his day's proceedings, and of his determination to prosecute his search until Cecil should be found."

"And I'll work with you !" exclaimed Crafton, resolved to share the counsels of the earl and know all his plans, that he might profit by them should occasion arise. "I tried to spare you this trouble, old fellow, but I could not. But I devote my life and energies to this search for Miss Rosse. Heaven grant we may find her soon !"

The earl grasped the hand of the traitor in a warm and trusting clasp.

"Stay with me," he said. "We will work together, Crafton. May God bless you for your true, unselfish, friendship in my hour of need !"

The two sat late that night arranging plans of action. The next morning the earl engaged the services of a detective and set him at work, but he did not give over his own search. He went over the whole ground carefully for himself. He saw and questioned Lady Trevor's hall-porter, and that person's story, founded upon a mistake, was

repeated with additions and embellishments such as suggested themselves to his mind. Lady Trevor and Mr. Pulford would certainly have been pleased if they had known how well the menial, whom they had wisely refrained from instructing, played into their hands.

The earl next sought out the cabman who had conveyed Miss Rosse and her servant to Lady Trevor's house. He corroborated Lady Trevor's story, repeating his own former statements to Crafton and Mr. Barker. The second cabman, he who had taken Cecil away from Lady Trevor's house, had been picked up by chance and could not be discovered.

Lord Glenham caused an advertisement to be inserted in all the daily newspapers, requesting the cabman who had taken a young lady and her servant from a house in South Audley street, upon a date which he mentioned, to call at a certain address and learn something to his advantage.

He wrote a second advertisement for the "agony column" of the *Times*, addressed to "Cecil of Zorlitz," and begging her to write to "Gordon," at the address of her Bayswater landlady, and inform him of her present address.

A third advertisement, more widely spread than the others, published in the newspapers and circulated in hand-bills, which were distributed throughout the entire kingdom, and sent especially to police stations and establishments, offered one hundred

pounds reward for information leading to the discovery of Miss Cecil Rosse, or her old German servant, Gretchen. Then followed a circumstantial description of Cecil and her attendant, setting down their height, features, and all the small items of personality that would be likely to attract the attention of strangers.

The earl's next movement was to proceed to Greycourt. Crafton went with him. The detective had preceded them, but they questioned the old housekeeper thoroughly, saw the letter Lady Trevor had written her, bidding her send to the station to meet Miss Rosse, and even visited the rooms which had been prepared for Miss Rosse and her servant. Crafton went further. He demanded to see the tapestry which Miss Rosse had been engaged to restore, and was conducted up to the chamber known as the Tapestry Room.

This was a long and large state apartment, like a French salon, the walls hung entirely with a rare and exquisite tapestry, embodying Scriptural designs, embroidered by delicate hands that had centuries since mouldered to dust. Much of the tapestry was still perfect, but there were great patches which moths had riddled or eaten out entirely. A skillful needlewoman would certainly require six months to restore it.

"Of course I didn't really doubt any portion of Lady Trevor's story," said Crafton, when his examination had been completed ; "still I am glad to see

it confirmed in every point. It makes our way clearer. We now positively know that Miss Rosse was engaged in serious earnest and perfect good faith to execute a most important work, and that Lady Trevor made every arrangement for her reception and stay here. The fault, clearly, does not lie at Lady Trevor's door!"

"You are arguing to satisfy your own doubts, Crafton, not mine. Thank God, I cannot suspect my own kinswoman of a horrible treachery or crime. What object could she have had in removing Miss Rosse out of other people's knowledge?"

"Jealousy might have prompted her to do it," replied Crafton. "You are blind, Glenham, or you would have seen long ago that the handsome widow adores you. She inherits from her adventuress mother a reckless, unscrupulous disposition—hear me out! capable—when urged to desperation—of crime!"

"Crafton, I cannot hear you speak so of Lord St. Leonards' granddaughter."

"Her innocence is established; I fully exonerate her. Forgive me, Glenham, if I run counter to your prejudices now and then. We cannot afford to overlook the faintest clew in a case like this. And now, I suppose, we can carry out your idea of visiting every station on the line?"

"Beginning at Euston Square. We must return to London to consult with the detective and to see if any answers have been returned to our advertisements."

They returned to town accordingly. The detective had gained no clew; the advertisements had received no answer. Then began an examination of those stations upon the railway line at which the mail-train stops. The detective learned that upon the day after that on which Cecil had disappeared, a young lady and her foreign servant, supposed to have been a French maid, had alighted at a station, midway between London and Leeds. This clew was followed up. Weeks were spent in tracing this young lady, whose description corresponded in several details with that of Miss Rosse, and she was finally discovered by the indefatigable detective to be the daughter of a wealthy Sheffield cutlery merchant, and not at all like Miss Rosse, except that she was also fair and slender.

The time spent in following up this false scent had been employed by the earl and Crafton in visiting every cab-stand in London. They interrogated every cabman, offering a large reward to that one who had conveyed Miss Rosse to the Euston Square station, but no cabman appeared to claim the reward. Thus weeks were consumed. The detective then, chagrined and disheartened, returned to town and a consultation was held at Lord St. Leonards' town-house one evening in November to consider what was next to be done.

At this meeting were present the old marquis, quite restored to health, and as active and energetic as the youngest there—Lord Glenham, haggard,

and worn, and stern, with a settled gloom in his gray eyes—Crafton, uneasy, watchful, and suffering scarcely less than the earl—and finally the detective, who was greatly depressed, but who still maintained his faith in his ultimate success.

Lady Glenham was at her country seat. Lady Trevor was spending a month with the countess, but was expected soon to return to her own house at Greycourt.

"No answer has been received to any of our advertisements, except the hand-bills," said the detective. "I have been diverted from my main search for the Sheffield young lady by several other false clues. I have just heard through a friend in my line of business of a young lady living very quietly in Paris who answers to the description of Miss Rosse. I shall leave for Paris in the morning to follow up this new scent."

"Crafton and I have visited every cab-stand in London and its suburbs," said the earl, despondently.

"But we have had no success. So many men are continually being discharged and replaced by others, and so many weeks have passed that I have quite given up hope of hearing from the cabman."

"We left printed hand-bills at all the cab-stands, and with all the proprietors of cab-lines," said Crafton, "and we may hear yet. We must not despair, although sometimes it seems as if Miss Rosse must be dead!"

"She is not dead!" said Lord Glenham, "I

know she is not. I have a perfect conviction that she lives—and that she is in sore need of help. But where is she? In what trouble is she encompassed? It seems sometimes as if I could not bear this suspense longer!" he added, with a groan.

"It will all come out right, my lord," said the detective, cheerfully. "The young lady is gone as a governess, or is in Paris, or somewhere else on the Continent. Lor', young girls are as freakish as colts. She was a lady and proud, and probably changed her mind about going up to Yorkshire, a-burying of herself alive, as one might say, and she might a-considered as it would be lowering of herself to do so. We shall find her, never fear. There's no darkness so deep as it can't be penetrated if you stay in it long enough."

"Find her, and name your own reward!" exclaimed Lord St. Leonards, with emphasis. "This mystery is wearing on me. That poor young girl, when I think of all the awful possibilities of her fate, I can neither eat nor sleep."

Lord Glenham arose hurriedly and paced the floor.

"But it will all come out right, of course," added the old marquis, with a compassionate glance at his heir. "We must keep up our courage and our search."

"To be so powerless, and she in deadly peril, perhaps!" cried the earl. "I received a letter to-day from the new pastor at Zorlitz. No one in the little German hamlet has heard of or from Cecil.

They offer prayers in the little Lutheran church for her, the pastor writes, and every villager shares our anxiety. Oh, where can she be? What has happened to silence her? I will not believe that she is dead—yet how can she be alive?"

"I'll find her for you in Paris," said the detective, rising. "Yet here are three or four clues which I intended to work out, and with which you might occupy yourself during my absence, should it be protracted."

He handed several slips of paper to the earl, and presently took his leave. He started for Paris the next morning, while the old marquis, the young earl, Mr. Crafton, and Mr. Barker proceeded to work out the clues he had given.

All were alike unsuccessful. The detective returned, reporting that the young lady whom he had sought in Paris was an art-student, and the daughter of a London surgeon. But his courage remained. He had some new ideas to work out, and was still hopeful of speedy success.

The advertisements were continued in changed forms. Those so deeply interested in Cecil's fate continued their indefatigable research. November gave place to December, January followed, and blustering March succeeded, and still Cecil was not found. More than one detective-officer was now employed in the case, which had become famous in police annals, a dozen theories had been formed and worked to unsatisfactory conclusion, but all the com-

bined acumen had failed to throw any light upon the young girl's fate.

It was late in March when the Earl of Glenham, haggard and thin, hollow-eyed, and with stern-set lips, presented himself at the St. Leonards house in Park Lane, at another meeting like that we have described. He was ushered into the library, and the old marquis arose and silently extended his hand.

"I received a letter from the detectives this morning, desiring me to meet them here this evening," said the earl. "Can it be that they have discovered something at last?"

"I fear not, yet let us hope while we may," said the old lord. "I've got a new trouble, Gordon. I heard the other day a repetition of the old rumor that Lady Trevor intends to marry Mr. Pulford, her hanger-on, the devoted friend of her dissolute husband! I wrote to her immediately. She answers that the story is false, yet I know that Pulford has boasted recently that he will be married to her within a month. I fear that there is more truth in the report than Edith is willing to admit. Is your mother still in the country?"

The earl replied in the affirmative. Mr. Crafton came in and was quickly followed by Mr. Barker, and the detective officers.

"We desire to render our report, my lords," said Mr. Martin, the detective first employed.

"You have good news at last?" cried the earl.

Mr. Martin's face grew despondent.

"I am sorry to say that we have no news whatever," he replied. "The young lady has been missing nearly six months. We have explored Great Britain and the Continent, but can find no trace of her. I may say that we have left no stone unturned in the search for her. We have scoured London. We have hunted in every likely and unlikely spot. The books of intelligence offices, governess-offices, fancy-work shops, every place where she might have been, have all been examined. You will find in these documents our accounts for moneys expended. The sums are large, but they have been well-employed."

"I will give you a check to cover them twice over," said Lord Glenham. "And now what do you propose to do next?"

The officers exchanged glances. Mr. Martin then replied :

"Well, you see, my lord, we have reached the end of the rope. There is nothing remains to be done."

"Do you mean that you abandon the case?"

"No, my lord, if you wants the whole ground gone over again. But for what good?" demanded Mr. Martin, impressively. "It's my opinion, and it's the opinion of us all, that there has been foul play somewheres, and the young lady and her servant have both been murdered. Such being our belief we couldn't in conscience take your money and linger out a search which is perfectly useless.

And so, my lord, we give up the case. The poor young lady is nowhere on the earth, or we'd have found her.

Lord Glenham drew a check for the amount he had mentioned, and attempted to reason with Martin; but that officer's convictions could not be shaken. The detectives presently took their leave, and the four gentlemen gazed at each other in blank dismay.

The case never looked to me absolutely hopeless until now, when the detectives have given it up," said the young earl, in a hollow voice. "And now, indeed, I feel that gloom which is the very blackness of darkness. Oh! Cecil! Cecil! where are you? Is it true that she is dead, in her youth and beauty, and goodness? Dead! I won't believe it! Dead? Oh! pitying Heaven, it is only too possible!"

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THE END.

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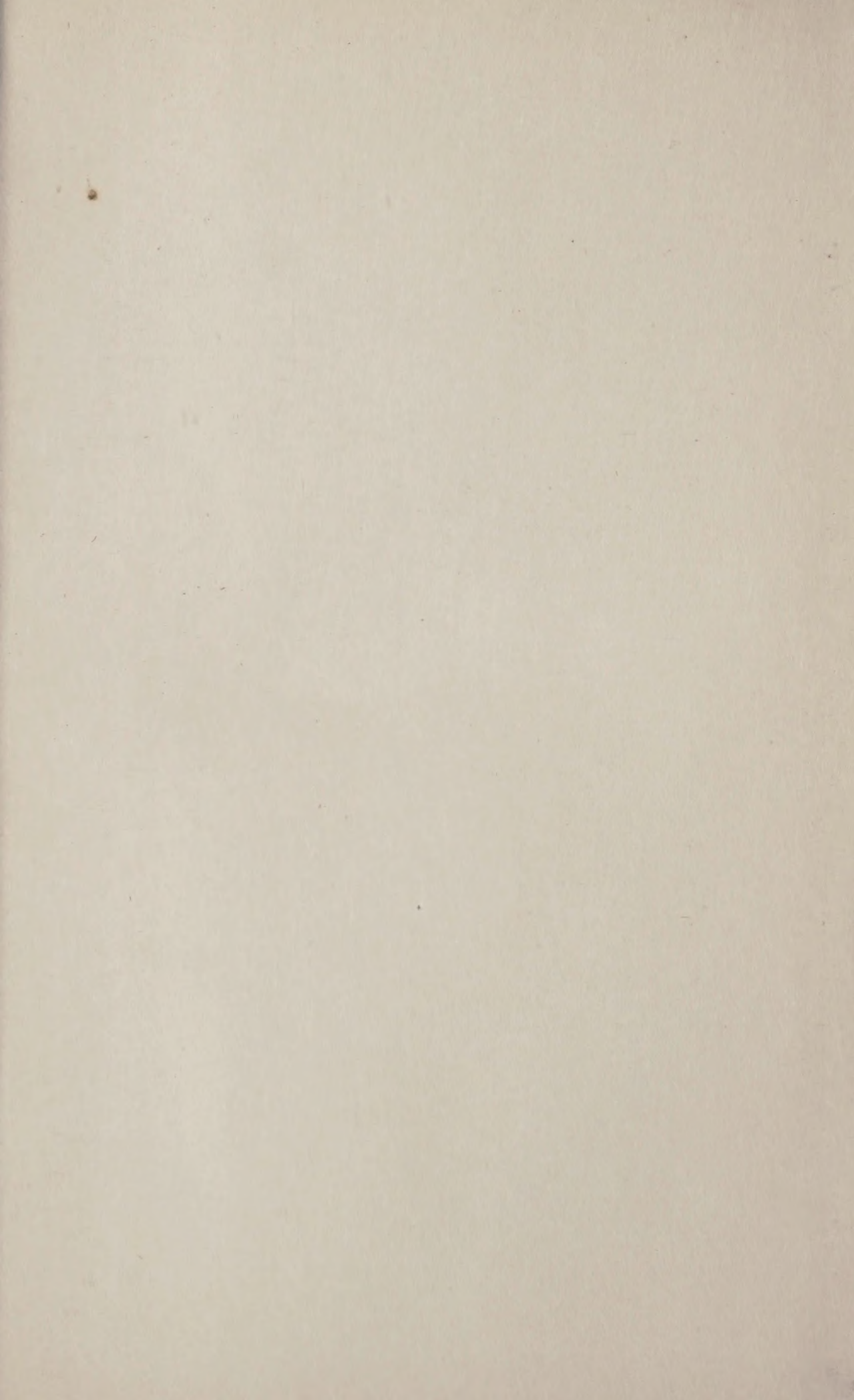
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